The Bell Jar Butterfly

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Summary

Alexander Hamilton is used to the hustle and bustle of the Big Apple. He's a young author just trying to make ends meet after a painful breakup. He's given an opportunity by his step-dad to watch over a colleague's son over in South Carolina. There is a grand amount of money being offered here, so Alex takes the job.

So when Alex meets and has to take care of John Laurens, he never thought things would quite turn out like this.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
ARRIVAL

By god, New York city was howling down with rain and Alex couldn't wait to get off this packed train. There was nothing worse than a packed train, people doing silly things, nudging into him, talking next to him when his head was beating with a horrid headache, everyone constantly looking at their phones, no one ever seemed to smile and this myriad of idiotic people really wanted to piss Alex off today even more than he already was.

Some woman with her baby wasn't doing anything, it was bawling its eyes out there in its sling and a pack of rude kids were blasting music loudly.

Alex winced when a man stepped right there, right on his foot as he was hurrying with a flock of people to get off at the next stop. Another woman pushed into him, not caring at all whether her shopping bags bashed into his own messenger bag and Alex hugged it to his chest. His precious macbook was inside, he couldn't afford to have that busted.

"Jesus, it wouldn't hurt to say excuse me" He grits as she walked past.

The woman heard him alright, she looks over her shoulder at him with a nasty look, she snubs him, her long earrings dangling as she whipped her head back from him. Alex just narrows his eyes and shakes his head. Some people though, he thinks.

Alex jilts as the carriage begins to shift again and he's immediately grabbing out for a handle to hold. There is more room on board now thankfully but it was still busy. Alex tilts back his head, closing his eyes for a second from the blinding lights above.

The train is jetting through the subway and he can feel the other next to him bash slightly to him. He thinks of what was to come today, starting a new job was never easy and Alex always found it difficult to mesh with others. He wasn't like other people. Alex knew he could never shut up, he was too abrasive with his political views, people avoided him because of his full on character and growing up, Alex pretty much didn't have any one to lean against. Aside from his foster father and close friends.

The carriage jilts to the other side and Alex stumbles into a man, he apologises quietly with a curt bob of his head and goes back to his trail of thoughts. It had been a real smack in the face when he didn't get into law school. Alex had been rejected.

His application had probably wandered into the pool of 'maybe' piles at best, but it wasn't even that his LSAT-GPA was even that bad either. They never really gave him a proper reason apart from the number of applicants had been too high. After that, Alex had to go on with his life and pick a subject he liked equally but nowhere near as much as Law.

His foster parents could afford it but Alex wanted to get in the normal way, not have his parents bribe the college with cash. He wasn't like that, Alex didn't want his name in dirt in the future, just incase some nosey person in higher-ups ever found out, they could use that against him. But in the end of it all, it had only resulted in Alex throwing his toys out the cradle in a hissy fit. He had so much to offer that course, so much to give to the world and he was constantly trying. His foster father just told him not to let it get him down.

So Alex eventually ended up going into English literature and became a writer instead, he was
always writing, his skill with words had brought him in a reasonable income when he went finally went full time. Including offering to write up articles for companies and summaries for other authors books.

But the job role that he was now asked to take on by his given foster father was a bit of a big step. It came right out of the blue the night before, Alex thought he'd been joking when he asked him.

He thought back to their conversation there on the phone at eleven at night. "Son, when have I ever been the one to joke around?" and he was right. He was a serious man, Washington meant dire business. Still it made absolutely no sense. The job he wanted Alex to take on was care-taking.

Fucking caretaking.

Alex had no experience in care giving, he could just about look after himself and the succulent plants on his window sill at home. Hell, he'd even killed a cactus before today. He was a writer, he had stressed this to his father but he had been told it would be a piss in the park. Easy, all he had to do was take care of whoever it was and Alex would be paid a heap of money. Use that money and get himself back into law school.

He really did appreciate his foster father looking out for him but this was out the question. Washington, his foster father had a lot of close ties with rich powerful men through work. This particular person however that his father knew, fairly well, wasn't even in New York. Whoever it was lived all the way down in the south. South Carolina, at that.

Alex had never, ever, even stepped foot down south in his life. He had no business in ever going either, the place was filled with the type of people Alex didn't particularly like. Religious nut-jobs, homophobes, racists who still though the year was 1928 rather than 2018. Although Alex did know not everyone from the south was like that, but it wasn't the same as New York. In New York it was diverse, you could be who you wanted to be, fully, inside and out. So when his father, Washington gave Alex the proposition and where he would be going, Alex flipped out.

"I'm not going!" Alex growled down the line. "I'm absolutely not doing it."

He could hear his father sigh. "Alexander, it won't be forever. It's only for a couple of months."

"What? You mean half a year of my life? Fuck, no."

"Watch your tone!" He had shouted back at him. Alex bit his lip and frowned, his fingers clenching the phone tightly, he wanted to launch the stupid thing. "Are you even listening to me, son? The money Laurens is offering is an amount that could get you into school. You could go back, become a lawyer. Since you're hell bent on not taking mine."

"You know I can't..." Alex muttered. He would feel terrible, Washington wasn't really his dad, no matter how good he was to him and his loving wife Martha. "I just can't. Not off of you."

"Then take this opportunity, son. You can still work on your book, all you have to do is look after whoever it is Laurens is asking you to." Washington sighs again. "It isn't difficult Alexander."
"Fine, you know what. Fine. Since it'll shut you up." He could hear Washington grumble down the line and there was a pause of silence, Alex broke it despite his throat closing up on him, it felt prickly and sharp.

"It's not my fault, you know that right? Is this... why you're getting me to do this job?" Alex stammered towards the end of his question. He hated how his voice wavered, he hated feeling weak. Alex had an idea as to why Washington was getting him to do this really. It wasn't even anything to do with Law school and the money he would earn baby-sitting god knows who.

"Alexander, no. Son, it isn't because of that." Washington tells him, his broad tone softening. "What happened with Elizabeth, you had no control over that."

Alex knew that but he had to keep telling himself it wasn't his fault. Miscarriages weren't easy, not at all. It was neither of their fault, her and his. He closed his eyes tightly and heaved a heavy breath through his nose. God, his heart still shattered every time he thought back to that day. Seeing his ex-girlfriend with the blood on her hands, the IV in her arm in a hospital bed and mascara steamed eyes.

That was a horror Alex never wanted to live through again and it always made him think back to that day, that last day with his birth mother and her lay in a hospital bed. The IV in her arm, her skin almost translucent and eyes hollow as she was dying by the day. So far Alex could fully admit, throughout the twenty-eight years of his life, it hadn't been the best but he was just glad he had the Washington's at least. That counted for something so it wasn't all terrible.

"Don't beat yourself up any more than you already have. Alexander, give this a try. If it isn't for you, that doesn't mean you can't come back to New York. You can always quit son." He tells him.

Then Alex thought about how his rent had gone up ever so slightly, he thought back to the rejection letter, his ex-girlfriend and what had been their baby, this little red blob in the palm of her hand. The splutter of Eliza's heartbroken sobs and tears echoing the bathroom.

The whole scene still giving him nightmares without even being asleep. Alex thought about how he wanted more in his life, to do more, to make a name for himself and the brighten up his future rather than live a life in the shadow of 'what could have been'. Perhaps, this job wouldn't be too bad. Six months, that's all he had to do. Six months and he could be loaded.

So he cleared his throat. "I'll try" Alex says into his phone. A sigh. "I'll try."

After getting off at his stop, smuggling his way through a sea of people there by the door, some nuisance kids rapping and they laugh, one tries to trip Alex up and he's shooting this tall black kid a murderous look. They call him all sorts of things but Alex waves them off, they're not worth his time.

He's out the station and on the walk home there in the rain. His apartment wasn't too far away thankfully, it wasn't the best complex but it would do. It's probably considered a dump to most who walk by it on better salaries but to Alex it's home.

As he's going inside, the elevator is out of order again and Alex just tilts his head back in annoyance. One of the tenants who live there also come in at the same time he does. Some middle-aged woman, her prominent Brooklyn accent as she's bitching "stupid fuckin' thing" with her small
chihuahua scooped up in her arms as she's taking the stairs. Alex sees just how startled the poor dog looks as she hauls it just over her shoulder. The dog was dressed in a bright pink frilly dress, pink tacky collar and even its claws were painted pink. All to match the woman's leggings.

Alex bites back a smile and he shakes his head. There were some total wacky people where he lived. He couldn't believe it. Jesus, he really needed to move the hell out of his complex.

So Alex follows suit, then after five flights up and he's at his front door. He's out of breath, sweaty and wet from the rain.

Inside his apartment Alex gives a bit of a huff and a sigh when he comes in. He's quickly flicking on the thermostat, it's not even winter yet and it's literally freezing cold already. He's probably over the limit on what he should be spending on his heating bill but Alex doesn't care. He wasn't going down for freezing to death and he sure as hell couldn't get sick, not now, not when he had work and to head down to South Carolina in the matter of days.

He tosses his keys to the stand by his door and slips off his soaking coat, throws it on the radiator and he's slumping down on his beaten up sofa. Sliding off his bag and getting out his macbook. With a quick once over, Alex lets out a sigh of relief when he sees it isn't fucked. Thankfully.

Alex didn't budge from the sofa for hours, once he got writing that was it. Well, apart from needing a quick piss or to grab another hot drink. He went through black coffee like tomorrow, which reminded him he needed a new jar of the stuff. It wasn't easy living by himself now. Sometimes Alex looked around and he still wondered where Eliza's hairbrush was from his nightstand, he still found some of her long brown hairs in his bathroom and kitchen.

Then there was her perfume, he was so used to the scent of Miss Dior or Chloe, that new one he'd gotten her for her birthday, still lingering around his rooms and now it just smelled like him. Stupid things like finding a hair tie of hers, clotted with her hair, not his own ones or one of her spare t-shirts. It felt weird to be single. Alex knew he should move on, it'd been a year.

A full year since they called it quits when she miscarried. Alex wanted to stay with her, be with her, but she just couldn't. Not after that and Alex respected her decision, he let her go.

Now he only ever saw Eliza when he met up with friends. She looked well, she always smiled and every time their eyes would meet, Eliza always looked away from him. It wasn't the same anymore. She came across as distant, she wasn't a distant person. Alex always felt that same guilt when she did that, she was still learning to probably come to terms with it all. It wasn't easy, Eliza was such a full on person, so bright and didn't possess one bad bone in her body. She always gave everyone her attention, she was polite and sweet. So when she did that to Alex and no one else, he always felt like a kicked puppy.

But he can done that to her. Gave her a child that failed her, failed them both. Alex knew Eliza would have a baby again someday, the right man would come along.

He even panned on marrying her, popping the question during her pregnancy. It never mattered to her that he didn't have all the money in the world, a lavish apartment there in the city, or the best clothes on the market, a proper family like her own and that he'd been in the system as a child. None of that ever mattered to her. Eliza had accepted him fully.

But all he could do now was wish her well. Let someone else give her the best life and evidently, Alex wasn't that person.

God, Alex raked a hand over his face and scratched consciously at his stubble. He had just gone
into his files now, trying to find a document and he's still got pictures of her there on his laptop. Old ones from when they first began dating. They looked so young. He shook his head and muttered, "Fuck sake" to himself. He wanted to delete them but he couldn't. So he just clicked off and he puts his laptop aside for a moment.

Alex gets up, has a quick stretch and he decides he best go pack. A quick check of his phone, he sees another message from Washington but ignores it and looks at the time. It's just turned seven.

So Alex goes ahead and grabs the spare small suitcase from under his bed. It's still pretty new, he's hardly really used it apart from that one trip down to Florida, Disney World he got dragged to by Eliza and her sister Peggy. He frowns to himself at the memory of her and he's grabbing out some clothes from his wardrobe that he wants to take. It was going to be six whole months so he needed basics, maybe something a bit dressy just incase and the usual like pyjamas. Underwear, socks, all that good stuff.

Alex couldn't believe he was doing this. He never thought in a million years he would be taking on this kind of job. He does wonder who it is he's going to be looking after, in what kind of way, he had no idea. All Washington told him was that the Laurens family were very, very wealthy. They had a luxury estate home and strong connections or well, Laurens did. Alex had a cheeky feeling he could perhaps sweet talk whoever Laurens was and get his foot in the door into a line of work he wanted. This job may just have his perks after all.

But his father, Washington couldn't tell him who he would be caring for. He didn't know himself apart from just the basic information. Alex hoped to god it wasn't some bratty teenager. He didn't like little kids, he liked kids, hell he wanted his baby with Eliza. But teenagers just rubbed him up the wrong way, majority had no damn respect and were all mouth nowadays. With Alex's temper, he knew he would end up belting the fucker around the head if it pushed him too far, that's if it was a teenager. He didn't care. Another reason why Alex refrained himself from going into teaching. Kids were hard work - but Alex would've loved his child. That's a whole different right there.

After ironing and sorting what he needed. Alex text his father back and he was given an address. Alex was to leave New York in two days.

Tapping the phone to his lip, he sat on the edge of his bed and stared at his open suitcase. He glanced around his bedroom, the photo frames now taken down leaving his walls bare. The crack that was running across his ceiling was worsening and his window wavering as the wind howled from outside. Sometimes it felt like everything was broken here, empty and falling apart.

"Well, I'm not throwing away my shot." He mumbled to himself. "Not this time"

He could do this.

Two days later came pretty quickly, much more quicker than he'd have liked and Alex was in the queue boarding his flight at JFK airport.

He was cranky, he hadn't slept properly at all, not from worry about this new job, but because his
neighbours above him wouldn't stop arguing all night. They didn't realise that the walls in that complex were paper thin. None of them had any morals or thought for others at all. In a sense it only made Alex pack his bags faster and when he left he felt liberated. Just to get the hell away from the place for five minutes.

His father Washington would be checking his place while he was away, just to keep the plants alive and check for any signs of a break in. So here Alex was, good ol' six am, his hair swept in a messy bun, in a loose grey hoody, some comfortable jeans and nice shoes. He could do without this, he wanted to go back to bed. Alex yawned as he hands over his passport and ticket, he's let through the gate and hauling himself on the plane.

Thankfully he made it just in time so he could grab a quick Starbucks before he got on board. Plane coffee always tasted like piss.

His flight went fast and Alex was glad. A hour of being stuck in the middle of a man who took up too much leg room and a little kid who couldn't keep still, just drove him up the wall. He got no sleep, Alex didn't expect to - so writing kept him sane and his ear plugs were a blessing. But he still didn't appreciate the brat next to him kicking her legs, the little Frozen sneakers she had on looked rather new. Alex envisioned himself nudging his coffee over them just to teach her a lesson. But he didn't, he kept it together and fought on writing the next chapter of his book.

Somewhere between writing and the humming of the aircraft Alex must've fallen asleep. The next thing Alex knew he was being shaken by one of the air hostesses. She's grinning at him, her bright red lipstick and pearly white teeth all up in his scowling face. Finally, just as he'd gotten some rest too and now it was back to being awake. Alex grumbled a 'thanks' and slapped down his laptop. Then remembering his work, he saves quickly and figures he best shift his ass since he was the only one left on the plane.

It's a nuisance hauling his laptop bag and duffle bag when he'd only had around three hours sleep, it's a pain going through security having to search and scan all his stuff. It's just plain annoying that he has to go up a pile of escalators and then figure the hell out where the exit was. Eventually he finds it and Alex is jogging up to the nearest cab on the taxi belt.

Charleston was so much different than New York.

Alex usually would be chatting the driver's ear off about god knows what, but right now he was too exhausted and the sights of the town were extremely captivating. Palm tree after palm tree passed his window, buildings in vibrant colours from pinks, to blues, to yellows, the hues were endless. Alex did note it was warm even though it was mid-Autumn, the South certainly did live up to the stereotype of it being hot. Alex was baking, he wasn't used to this humidity. He's taking off his hoodie and re-tying his bun, he was roasting.

But then Alex noticed how they were drifting off into another part of town, it felt quieter the area they were eloping into now. Alex's eyes were wandering the streets and he noticed there were a lack of houses. It was mostly trees, tall willow trees among their fencing, then down this long, long pebbled road and that's when he saw the neighbourhood they were passing. Alex had never seen houses so big before in his life.

They were huge, they looked as if they could be palaces there with their mighty white pillars and arched windows. How the rich lived, huh. Alex shook his head at them, they were beautiful but that amount of room wasn't really necessary and Alex had to admit, he was a little jealous. He thought back to his dingy apartment in New York, the neighbours, the rain and how the place was on its hinges. Falling apart bit by bit, kind of, like his life in a sense.
The drive was tedious, Alex hoped they would arrive soon because he knew the fare was going to be ridiculous. He was glad the Laurens were covering it. Apparently they would be covering all his costs, they'd covered the flight cost and the cab cost. So there was that but Alex just wanted out this car, it was just so warm and he was getting pins and needles in his legs.

That was when they turned a corner and on the very end of this road, hidden behind more trees and they're just driving past this long spiked black fencing, Alex saw it. The house, it was magnificent. It was beautiful, an old fashioned southern belle of a mansion right there. It's white coated shell glimmering beautiful in the sunlight, a black tiled-rooftop and its pillars on three on its storeys. The size of it was humungous. As they're pulling into the drive, it's almost like a maze and they're going another way since that wasn't even the drive-way. The actual drive was a long cobbled way past black gates and they're nearly at the front door.

Alex had been told by his father when he arrived that he had to give Laurens a call. No one would hear him if he knocked and Alex could see why. Despite the house being insanely beautiful, Alex saw a loneliness to it as well. With its many trees surrounding it, far away from anywhere near other houses. Alex had no idea how they lived like this, life, people, the world was so far away.

He dialled the number he was given and its ringing as they're pulling in closer. "Hello?" Alex says, he can hear fumbling in the background and then suddenly he's got a voice on the other end.

"Ah, yes. Hello? Is this Alexander Hamilton?" Alex doesn't know why he's shocked that it's a woman talking. He had expected a man.

Alex is looking back up at the house, there were so many windows, all of them staring down at him. Watching. "Yes, it is. Listen, right, I'm literally just pulling up right outside your home. We've come in the front way?"

He could hear the clanking of heels echo underneath wooden flooring. "Oh, brilliant. Yes! Okay, I am on my way Mr. Hamilton. Please do wait."

So Alex is handing some notes to the driver and he's grabbing his stuff from the trunk. Just as the cab is beginning to shift out the drive, the door opens and Alex turns to find a lithe little woman come his way. She casts him a broad smile, her appearance smart in a black midi dress and long cardigan with some tall heels although did her no justice. Alex returns a small smile of his own, it was forced and he was merely just being polite.

"Mr. Hamilton" She says, she's right at his feet and holding out a hand to him. Alex looks down at her, giving a curt nod and shaking her hand. Her little cold hands were firm, hard against his clammy ones.

"Miss Laurens" With a quick shake, she pulls away and offers to take one of Alex's bags but he tells her its fine. He thought in a place like this, there would at least be a butler or something. There didn't really seem to be anyone.

"You can just call me Eleanor," She tells him and they're walking up the steps inside. Alex is lugging behind his small case, a duffle bag and laptop bag on his arm. All he wants is rest, his back is hurting and he's exhausted by this point. "How was your flight?"

Alex just lets out an awkward chuckle. She is eyeing him, already she knows exactly how it probably went for him and she gives him such an apologetic look. She pats him on the shoulder sympathetically. "Oh dear. Well, not to worry, you will get plenty of rest today. Do not worry about beginning your job, you can start properly tomorrow as I will be leaving a dawn." She says. Alex's eyes question her and she continues. "I work away a lot of the time, so I cannot be here as
often as I wish. My job is very demanding and our son, he needs a fair dose of attention you see."

"Uh, huh" Alex slips out.

She nods at him, her smile fading slightly. "Yes, not to worry though. He is a good child. Mr. Washington told me all about you, Alexander." Then her big grin is back. Alex tries not to be rude as he's trying to listen to her and look around at this place all at the very same time.

The hall was huge, the stair cases both on either side leading to the upstairs and Alex looked up to see the third storey just there. There was a huge chandelier that hung above, it looked priceless. So old and beautiful, fragile though. Polished wooden dark flooring, halls that lead to other places. Lauren's could see him staring around and she just giggles.

"You seem impressed Alexander" She says, watching him carefully. Alex nods.

"You have a stunning home" He tells her and he's just looking around in awe even more. Lauren's pats him on the back and they're walking again.

"Why don't you drop your things off here, just leave them by the table there and I will give you a tour. Would that be alright?"

Alex wasn't going to say no to leaving his gear for five minutes, he needed a little break. So he does and he's following Laurens. She starts to tell him about the house, the mansion really, it was decades old and dating back to the early 1800s.

She showed him around the house. The grand kitchen, it had a modern touch, the dining room with a long table and lonely seats scattered all down it. There was the bathroom with a large old fashioned tub, but Alex was told there was around five bathrooms maximum in the whole house. He let out a low whistle when he got told that and rolled his eyes when her back was turned.

He was shown various rooms such as the library which even had a little ladder that swirled around the shelves. Laurens found it amusing when Alex was bouncing around it looking at all the books. He couldn't believe it, he had his own, his very own personal library. There was a study too. There was just too much to see and look at. Vases littered in the hallways and paintings that hung up high.

"I gotta ask, are you guys royalty or something?" Alex asked her.

Laurens chuckled at his question, she shook her head. Alex's brow rose up.

"No, we are not. But this house was passed down my late husband's family. Generation, after generation. It dates back to around the revolution period actually. We have had a fair bit of renovation here and there though lately but nothing too drastic." She says with a smile. "But, my lovely dear husband, Henry, he preferred to keep the house as it had always been since he was a child."

They made their way around a corridor corner. "And he longed for it to be passed down to our eldest, John." She said, although, Alex notices how her smile falters ever so slightly. Alex chews the inside of his lip, he knows something is up. He doesn't ask though. It wasn't his place.

She shows him a few other rooms, they weren't anything special though. As they're passing along though, Alex is looking out the arched long windows there. The wilderness outside, grassland and a sea of trees. It was gorgeous. All their leaves in milky shakes of auburn, yellow and red. Some of them trees already bare from the touch of the coming winter. Then he's turning his attention back to the wall, Alex had to admit this house was stunning but he could got a sense of loneliness and numbness.
This wasn't a house he would've liked to have grown up in, if he were totally honest and that is despite him even being someone from the system. Alex had been in countless amounts of foster homes before the Washington's adopted him. But even then, they were always lively and warm. This place, it felt so cold.

Then Alex is turning back to glance over at Laurens. She was talking him about the paintings on the wall, how they were real and painted by god-knows who from such an era. Alex really couldn't care less. He just wanted to meet the kid and bed.

But Eleanor Laurens, was a pretty woman Alex found and even for her age, she looked as if she were in her mid-forties at most. Her tanned skin, dark curly hair in its loose up-do and freckles splattered on her cheeks made her look that extra bit younger. She smiled at Alex, her red lipstick making her that bit aged but she looked beautiful, seemed kind.

But in a strange sense, cold. It was her eyes more so than her smile, her dark brown eyes came across very stoic and steel. It rubbed Alex up the wrong way and he had only known the woman less than an hour.

"I best introduce you to our John then" She says, her voice sounding almost dreary at the mention of this 'John'. But she kept that smile, Alex realised this was probably an act.

Alex popped his hands in his pockets as they're walking up this hallway, it was so dark and the long arched windows didn't really do the place much justice. The outside world was bright, Charleston in all its glory but here, inside this place, Alex was beginning to wonder if anyone had actually been murdered and then he thought about ghosts, then told himself to stop being ridiculous. It was just an old house.

"John?" Alex repeats in question. He looks to her and she nods, sullenly.

"Mm, the reason why we need you here Mr. Hamilton, is, well, not to baby-sit him." She tells Alex. While she does, Alex pulls a bit of a frown when she isn't looking. He didn't get why he was here then. "You see, John, unlike his younger brothers and sisters, he was difficult to raise. He found it not very easy to make friends growing up, we have always had him homeschooled since he left his private school."

At this information Alex was beginning to realise as to why this John Laurens needed caring. The poor guy probably had no idea how the world worked, they probably had never even let him out this place.

"Is he a shy kid?" Alex asked because just great if John was. As if it was going to be any easier, coaxing his very own personal mute out of their shell.

Laurens waved him off. "He is so and so, I would say. But that wasn't the reason why he never returned back to school. John was bullied fairly badly." Alex feels suddenly terrible for asking now. It made him wonder just what type of person this John was now. Was he fragile, jittery, awkward, anxious? Alex didn't know, there were no pictures on the walls of anybody either. He found that kind of strange too, no family members. Nothing.

Alex thought back to the Washington's and how even he, was up on their living room wall. They weren't even his parents biologically and yet they treasured him.

"I'm sorry" Alex says, he didn't know what else to really say.

She just nods at him as she continued to smile and tells him not to worry. They stop at a room on
one end of the hall, Laurens knocks on the door and no reply came as they waited. Her smile faded as Alex watched her and she's opening the door. With a twist of the handle and she's the first to go inside.

As she goes inside, Laurens has a quick look around and Alex remains outside instead. He didn't want to step inside just incase it wasn't allowed and she's back out, sighing and shaking her head.

"I told him to wait in there..." She said, brow furrowed. "I apologise Alexander, John isn't in his room. He has a habit of going missing sometimes. I have a feeling where he just may be though."

They start walking back the other way, down the long dark hallway and they're heading down the stairs back on the second floor. That was when Laurens's phone rings and she excuses herself for a moment. She heads off into another room, shutting the door behind her and leaving Alex out there by himself.

"Jesus christ" He murmurs to himself. Alex goes to have another quick peak out the window and then he's wandering around in circles by himself. He can hear her in the room mutter and shout down the phone. Alex winces.

He had a feeling Laurens wasn't all that she made out to be and so Alex gets tired of listening, he walks off into another direction there in the wall and he stops when he sees one door on the very end of another long hallway open. Only a slim tint of light passes through the door that is open ajar there.

Alex is drawn to it, hands back in his pockets and he's walking over slowly.

As he gets to it, Alex quietly creeps behind the door and he looks through. Inside appeared to be filled with paintings but these were colourful, bright and beautiful.

Not dim and dingy like the ones around the house. Alex opens the door and he trails inside. He's mesmerised by all the gorgeous pieces, they're on shelves, on the floor, easels all around the room. There was a huge arched glass door there that was open, allowing some cool breeze inside. Paints were all over the shelves and other art supplies.

Hanging down as Alex noticed were paper cranes, paper aeroplanes, fluffy clouds made out of cotton wool and a set of planets, all painted carefully in detail forming a solar system.

The ceiling was painted dark navy blue, little light blue clouds and white ones, dabs of yellow, orange and red to form stars. Alex actually smiled to himself, it was incredible. So beautiful and the effort gone into it must've taken hours. He reaches to flick one of the paper cranes and it swings. Back, forth, back, forth. Alex's smile widens and he moves on around the room, there was so many various little projects there on the side table. Sketchbook after sketchbook, piled high.

He's captivated by a particular piece and this one involved two bodies. Alex squinted and he was certain they were men, they looked like they were. Both embracing one another in this minimalist type of style on a white canvas. Each line with different bright colours. It seemed a bit strange for something so, well, random like that to be painted there.

Alex tilts his head at another one and this one looked like it could be the Laurens's backyard and there was another - they were all amazing. Then that was when Alex noticed this particular object on the main table in the room of whoever it belonged to. There were spare paints out loose still, brushes in mucky cups and scissors with card still underneath, loose pieces of paper on the floor and glue sticks.
He goes over almost with some caution, Alex hesitates for a second whether he should touch it but he gives in. He picks it up and he's looking it over, it's like a small carousel.

That was when Alex remembered reading something about these, zoetropes, a stop motion story but made out of paper. When Alex looked at the side of it, he saw there were strips and strips of various little cartoons. A flower blooming then dying with petals around it, ones with a dog wagging its tail. Alex fingering the strips and he's getting the zoetrope, he's giving it a spin and he's looking inside.

It flickers fast, it's impressive how it's made too. It was literally made just out of card.

That was when Alex's eyes widens when he sees just what type of story motion it's showing. A stomach, a womb, a baby inside of it -

Then it's gone.

What makes it worse is when Alex hears a voice and from the sounds of it, it wasn't Laurens's either.
"Who are you?"

At this surprise Alex drops the zoetrope and it lands on the floor with a clatter. "Shit!" He hisses and he's picking it up, placing it back on the table where it belonged. "Oh god, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't even be in here. Fuck."

As he looks up Alex finds that he's eye to eye with a young man there in the door way. He looks no older than probably twenty at most, he's young looking, very lean, milky tan skinned with freckles jotted around his face, a small upturned nose and the most curliest, chestnut hair in pretty ringlets tied in a low pony-tail. Alex already knew that this kid was probably John. He basically resembled his mother even from his hazel eyes he shared with her and but his skin was a tone lighter.

He stood at the same height as Alex though, Alex kind of hated how some kid was his height. He brushed off that thought and tried to put on a smile. "Yeah, uh, I'm sorry about that. I'll just be going."

Then this guy is walking in the room, he's got his eyes to the floor and he's consciously scratching the back of his nape. Alex figured that this was his room and what he'd just seen was obviously private. How awkward.

"It's okay, um. Sorry, you startled me, that's all."

Alex nods and he puts his hands there on his hips, his fingers tampering away on them. He's looking around the room again then back to whoever this guy was. "Cool, okay. Ah, oh god, I better introduce myself. Hamilton, Alexander Hamilton" and he's offering out his hand.

This guy coyly comes over to him and he's shyly taking his hand, he took it lightly, Alex noted just how soft his hands were and he shook it gently before quickly withdrawing it. "John Laurens"
Ah.

Just as he thought. So this was who he was going to be spending the next six months of his life with. Alex stares long and hard at him which causes John to look away. He drops his eyes to the floor from Alex. Already Alex can smell the confidence drizzling away off of John.

To save the pussy footing Alex chimed in first, he could tell John was probably in shock that a stranger had not only invaded his space, but had also been venturing into his personal projects. Very personal at that.

So he's giving the room another glance around and smiled before he said, "Quite the artist then, I take it?"

John hums softly and he's walking past Alex towards the table there. He reaches for one of the strips, toying with them in his fingers. He doesn't look at Alex, Alex suspects he may be feeling embarrassed and there was a tint of shame there in his expression. But Alex had to make him feel better, he got it, John was young, homosexual and enjoyed making art revolving around his sexuality. Alex really didn't care.

"I make art" John says, a little too sternly. "It's nothing, special but I like it. It keeps me busy."

Alex nods along and he's looking back to John. "You're good at what you create, I'll give you that. Better than what I could do! I can't even draw damn stick men..." He chuckled, Alex is glad to see a ghost of a smile there on John's lips. The guy had been glum ever since he entered the room. Alex noticed the dark circles under his eyes too. He wondered if John slept enough. "So, uh, how old are you?"

"I'm 21" John told him.

Oh, so he was only a few years younger than himself. Then John asked, "What about you? How old are you?"

"28" Alex replied, he shoots John a small smile. "I'm officially old, but, hey! I've had a good run." He says jokingly, John looks at him as if he doesn't quite understand. Alex composes himself and clears his throat. "Yeah, so, I'm the guy who is spending six months with you. Your mother, Eleanor? She hired me for the job."

John takes a seat on the edge of the table and Alex doesn't really know what to call John's expression. It was so distant, John seemed very impassive and Alex was kind of hoping this guy would show some kind of enthusiasm. Even if it was negative, John shouting or screaming the odds. It would be more interesting than putting up with a life-sized dummy for the next couple of months.

"Why?" John asked, his voice, hollow as ever.

That was what Alex wanted to know himself. John didn't look like he needed caring, he could walk, no doubt feed himself, the guy could draw and do all kinds of fascinating things apparently.
Plus, Alex could tell he was into some freaky stuff. Apart from John showing zero signs of emotion, he looked fine. Unless his mother was completely overprotective of him.

Alex had no idea. He shrugs and says, "Your guess is as good as mine." The silence between them was becoming nauseating. Alex is swaying on his legs there, hands in pocket and he remembers, John's mother. "Oh yeah, your mom, she's looking for you."

John sighs, actually sighs and closes his eyes as he does. Alex questioned his relationship with her, then again, Alex sensed his own mother couldn't wait to get away from this place tonight. Let alone her own son. "Right, where is she then..." John says, he's getting up from the table and walking towards the door. Alex follows suite.

They're heading out of the art room and back out into the dark hallway. Alex keeps his eyes on John as they're heading up towards the end. He couldn't help but admire John, up close he was pretty. Very pretty. A small uppity nose, jotted freckles all over his skin and long lashes above his hazel eyes. His eyes are a unique colour. Alex never saw ones quite like them back in New York.

South Carolina seemed to have plenty of surprises.

John is the first to find his mother and she's still on the phone as they approach her. She spots them both, her brow rose and she tells whoever it is on the line, that she'll have to call them back later. Laurens puts the phone down, tucks it into her pocket and she grins at them both. "Ah, you finally met John" She says. Laurens said it like it were a bad thing. Alex's nose squelched up, he tries to smile back at her but she sounds so false.

"Mother" John lets on, lifelessly. He looks at her with such voidness in his eyes, Alex is bouncing between them both. He could see the way they looked at each other, so foreign and unfriendly.

"Ah, yeah. I found him, we've had a chat. Haven't we, John? Seems a cool guy." Alex says, he's trying here. Anything to lighten up the situation. Alex doesn't miss John's gaze drift to him, it's less cold. Their eyes meet and John doesn't look at Alex the way he does his own mother.

His mother gives an 'mm' and says, "You've already been introduced. That's wonderful! Yes, John - Alexander is the man who I told you about. He will be taking care of you while I am on business." She tells him. John looks at anywhere but her. "I want you to behave for him. Be good - Understood?"

At her words, John flickered his eyes back to hers and held it for a few seconds. Alex watches John and John's eyes, they narrow ever so. They're bright and pretty but stormy inside. A lot of hate is filled in them. Alex knows that look, it's the same one he saw kids in foster care give their foster parents. Untrusting, cold.

Alex really did feel out of place though.

Before John could reply to her, Alex stepped in and he's letting out a false laugh. "Of course he will! John's a good kid."

Laurens chuckled along with him, her eyes diving into another direction as she did, almost as if she didn't really believe Alex's words. Then she's looking back to John. Alex swore in the corner of his eye, John narrowed his that extra bit more. "Yes, mother."

With that John bounds back in the direction of his art room leaving Alex and Laurens alone. As he's walking off, his pony-tail swaying, Laurens sighs aloud and looks to Alex with a tiresome expression. "I am incredibly sorry if John's attitude may have offended you. He can be extremely..."
rude at times." She grits. Alex waved her off.

"No, no. It's alright. Honestly, when I met him back there, he was fine." Alex tells her.

Laurens tilts her head to the side, she blinks at Alex in disbelief. "What? He spoke?"

Alex pulls a face at her as he's trying not to laugh. "Yeah?" He didn't get it. Surely his mother knew he could speak.

"Interesting" She says sounding flabbergasted. "John, he rarely speaks. Especially not to people he doesn't know." Laurens shot her gaze directly at Alex. "Although, I am glad. He needs friends."

Alex scratched the back of his head as he awkwardly laughed. "He'll be fine, I'm pretty talkative."

"Where did you find him?" She asked.

Alex turned to the direction of the art room. John now out of sight. "Down there, in that art room. It's impressive in there, let me tell you. John's an amazing artist."

Laurens's smile faltered and her eyes went back to being stone cold. Alex saw the change in her as soon as he mentioned that room and he mentally kicks himself for doing so. She didn't look pleased.

"Yes, well, John is never out of there. He spends an awful amount of time whisked away in his fantasies." She states bitterly. "Our John has a bizarre mind. But make sure, after dark he is out of that room and in his own room." Alex nods, he didn't see the harm in John doing whatever he did. Evidently John was content being in there and Alex couldn't blame him. It was the brightest, happiest place in the entire house.

Laurens goes through others things about the house with Alex. Make sure all doors are locked, what key goes in where, how things worked, where Alex would be staying and Laurens gave him a whole chamber to himself. It was a huge bedroom.

A chandelier there on the ceiling, a giant bed with a chase at the end of it. Long arched windows with a seat. Alex noticed there were bookcases along side one of the walls, he was full of excitement just seeing that alone. The bedroom had an ensuite too and walk in wardrobe. Alex gave a low whistle when he stepped inside and had a good wander around. Laurens was busy chattering on about the price and age of the drapes, Alex couldn't care less about those. He was besotted with that bookcase and the view from his room of the Laurens's grounds. Perfectly cut grass, shaven bushes and beautiful willow trees.

Then in the kitchen she has Alex go through some details with her about John's medicine. He had to take pills. When Alex asked what they were for she told him that they simply gave John a boost. But her eyes told him, don't push it and so he didn't. After a contract signing and some more details. It was almost early evening and Laurens told Alex she had to go soon. There was already plenty of enough food in and Alex could help himself. She paid Alex a good sum upfront and gave him extra money for anything else they needed. He would be paid monthly, straight in his account and when Alex logged into his online banking, saw the figures landed there in his bank account, his eyes lit up.

After that Laurens big Alex goodbye outside the mansion, a cab already waiting for her and she had her case at the ready. "Please, Alexander do keep me informed." She says to him as she pulls up the handle of her case. Alex helps her carry down the few of the steps.

"I will, it'll be fine." Alex reassures her. "You have nothing to worry about"
Laurens looked to him as she opens the cab door, her eyes sad this time and a small but broken smile on her lips. "Do look after him." She says softly.

Alex gives her a subtle nod and she drops her gaze when he does. Laurens gets into the cab and Alex stands there, house key in his hand as he watches the cab take off down the long pathway. He had to wonder to himself, why she looked so sad. She couldn't seem to get away quick enough too. The case Laurens took with her was small, cabin size. Yet they had a full house of stuff. The family was strange alright, Alex sighed to himself as he watched the cab vanish out of sight. He tried not to think much of it and heads back inside.

Once Alex has locked up, he decides to take up his case and bags up to his room. Three flights of stairs were not easy and Alex was far from being fit as a fiddle either. That's how writing got him.

Alex parks his bags and case then decides to finally have a few minutes to himself. Just to adjust to the place, he really wishes he could crack the window open but they weren't ones that could be opened. They were so old fashioned. Alex sits on the bed, it's cushy and bouncy. He's grabbing his laptop bag and grabbing his macbook out, flipping it open and unravelling his charger. It's been too long, Alex wonders if the place has wifi. That was one thing he forgot to ask Eleanor but he could always ask John later or text her.

Just as Alex suspected either - no service. He leans back against the headboard and rolls his eyes. This house was really far back in the ages, no wifi. So Alex puts his macbook aside and figures he best go check on John, since that was what he is supposed to do.

Finding his way around the house wasn't easy, Alex checked in various rooms for him and John was no where to be found. Alex even checked the art room, John wasn't there. Alex couldn't remember where John's bedroom was either. So he gives up, if John needed anything he was big and old enough to go find him. Alex heads to the kitchen and after checking his phone, it's already eight in the evening, that it was time for dinner.

Laurens had packed a lot of things in too. There was plenty enough to feed for them weeks and Alex decided to just make a quick meal. Everything was already there, some of the pans, bowls and cutlery looked unused. Alex was on his knees going through a cupboard for another pan, the stove was on and the stir fry he was tossing up, was simmering rather nicely. Alex was a pretty damn good cook too. Eliza always loved his food.

Alex thought about her and his heart sank. Whenever he cooked for her she always asked for more. When she had been carrying their baby, she asked for even more and that had been fine. He didn't mind. Eliza singing and rubbing her stomach as she copped some carrots, Alex smiled along while he would stir the pan. Everything was good.

As he heaved a small sigh Alex is surprised to find a small Disney mug hidden at the back there. It looked old, minnie's face was half faded and the year was almost a decade ago. Alex gave it a look over and saw on the bottom "Marthas mug!" with a big messy smiley face to go with it. Alex gave it another once over before putting it back and as he began to stand up. Alex almost jumped out of his skin when he came face to face with John lurking behind him

"John!" Alex wheezes. His big brown eyes wide and look of shock on his face. John stands there blank as ever however. He didn't even flinch. "You scared me to death! Jesus christ.
John then darts his eyes to the mug there underneath and he gestures to it. "That's my sister's" He states glumly. Alex just nods and makes a 'uh huh' before he shuts the cupboard door.

"She's dead now" John tells him and shrugs.

Alex's eyes are still wide and John looks back to him, his hazel eyes bore into his own. He didn't seem bothered at all and his tone held nothing in it.

Alex bit his lip and he's going back to the stove. "I'm sorry" He tells John. He had no idea what else to really say. Alex knew all about death himself, too many people he knew and loved had died before today. He could only offer John a little smile then turns back to the stir fry. He's grabbing the spoon and flipping the vegetables around. John moves closer to him, slowly and he's leaning against the counter beside Alex. Just watching.

"I'm making some stir fry, it's pretty good. It's just vegetables, some chicken, bit of spice, I make a mean dinner." Alex smirked to himself - god he sounded so cocky. John drums his fingers against the counter as he's watching Alex carry on cooking. Apart from the simmering and sizzling noises from the pan there was no conversation. Alex didn't know what to do at this point - John just wouldn't speak.

He adds in a bit of soy and sesame oil to it before giving it all another flip over. That was when John perked up and said, "Can I try?"

Alex looked to him there at his side and John was leaning back, staring him dead in the eyes with that same expression. Blank, emotionless. His hazel void rummaging into his soul. It gave Alex chills. Alex stood back and he's passing John the big spoon. "Sure, knock yourself out kid."

John takes it off Alex and their hands brush, fingers graze each others ever so slightly. Alex notices that and he could have sworn they linger that bit longer too. He shakes off the thought and allows John to take lead. As he does and Alex has gone back to the cupboard, grabbing out an extra pan, he notices John roll up his shirt sleeves. Alex almost drops the pan as he does, his eyes go wide when he sees John's forearms.

They're littered with scars, cutting scars. They were all healed, but Alex could see them clear as day there. John doesn't even pay Alex any attention, he shows them off without a care and continues mimicking what Alex did there at the stove.

Alex knew he shouldn't stare but he couldn't help it. They were right there on display. Some looked deeper than others too and Alex winced when his eyes trailed on them. Perhaps this was the reason why his mother needed John under supervision. Great, Alex thinks. He's stuck with a mute suicidal. He knew he really shouldn't be so ignorant though. John did just mention he lost his sister, this could have been the cause of it. Also, Alex was certain his mother told him that John's father died too. Maybe him and John had more in common than he thought.

"You're doing pretty good" Alex tells him after he's cleared his throat. "It's nearly done now, hope you're hungry." John lets out some kind of grunt sound, Alex took it as his own agreement and let that be that.

After everything has been dished out, Alex and John sat around the kitchen table. They could have easily gone in the dining room but that long table and the many chairs seemed so unnecessary. Besides it was more intimate sat here at the small kitchen one, he could talk to John and get to know him. Try to crack him open.

Alex is slurping up some of his noodles, chewing them and ending with a 'gulp'. He's watching
John pick at his food, he didn't eat as quick as him. John even ate the old way, fork in his right and knife in his left. Although Alex told John he didn't need a knife. He found it amusing how John had true table manners, unlike himself. Alex always got told off by Eliza and the Washington's for eating his food like a pig growing up. It was just something he couldn't break out of.

"So, John, do you study? Go to college? Got any online classes?" Alex asks, he's twirling his noodles around.

John keeps his eyes to his plate, his fork moving around food. He shakes his head.

"Really? Damn, well, it's pretty cool college. I used to love it - well I kinda hated it in my first year because I wanted to be a lawyer, I didn't get on that program and so I did English Literature instead. Sucked but I learned to like it." Alex drawled on. John took in a small piece of broccoli and nibbled on its head. Alex was sure he was listen but in his own way. "Then when I got a girlfriend, college was-"

Alex was suddenly cut off when John spat out, "I like boys"

At this Alex's brow rose and John looked to him this time. Alex just huffed a laugh and shrugged his shoulders. He already knew that though. "Oh, alright? That was a little random John. But cool." He offers John another small smile before going back to his food. John drops his gaze and he finally, takes a mouthful of his own.

"It's good" John says after he swallows.

Alex's grin widens and he gives John his thanks.

"I wish I could cook" He tells Alex after another mouthful. He slurps up some noodles.

Alex is almost finished with his food now. He's just waiting for John. "I could teach you, it's not difficult. It's relatively easy. Teach you a few dishes, we'll cover the basics." Alex says.

John kind of smiles or what Alex thinks he does. He's still figuring John out. After dinner Alex is the one doing the washing up, John is at the table still and he's watching Alex. Alex does his best to talk to John about anything, his job, his current novel, college, his adoption. Alex is an open book, John just listens and says not much. But in a sense, it was kind of nice. Having someone listen to him and someone he could rant to about his bastard colleague Jefferson. John having no idea who any of them were, it didn't matter, at least he was there.

"You're a writer. What do you write?" John asks, Alex wasn't really talking about his book anymore and it amazed him how John's mind seemed to work. He just threw out the most unrelated questions.

Alex looked over his shoulder at him, he puts a dish on the rack. "It's about a guy who had a pretty, damn, rough start in life. But hey, he's pretty sure he's not gonna throw away his shot at life." He adds chuckling.

"Tell me more"

So Alex did. He tells John the story over a cup of black coffee and water for John. It turned out John didn't like drinking anything else but water. He said he hated anything else. Alex asked why
and John ignored the question. "You guys got wifi here? I've got work to get on with on my laptop and I just can't seem to connect to anywhere."

John shakes his head. "My mother took it away."

Alex scrunched up his face as if he were disgusted. Because how dare there be no wifi. "Why?!"

"I used to look at naked men. Men fucking. She got mad when she found out." John brazenly tells him. Alex scoffed at him and turned back to finishing off washing the pan. He couldn't believe John. How he could just sit there with a face like a plain piece of paper and just spill these kinds of things.

"She's a bitch."

Alex snorted at John. John really didn't care. It was the way he said it, bluntly and almost as if he sounded disgusted of her. Alex didn't miss that.

"That's, wow, holy fuck." Alex tried his hardest not to giggle. "You're a pretty hands on guy, aren't you?"

John leaned forwards, his scars still on show there and he's got his chin in his palms, resting. He looks on at Alex, tilts his head to the side. "Why wouldn't I be?"

Alex shrugs. "It isn't a bad thing, it's just different. Not everyone can be as upfront like that." He tells John.

"I don't care" John says quietly. "I have nothing to loose."

That last part gets Alex. It irks him and he wants to turn to John, but he doesn't. His hands stiffen in the water there before he goes back to putting the pan on the drying rack. He pulls out the plug and dries off his hands.

"So you just spend most of your time making art then?" Alex said and he's batting his hands on the sides of his jeans.

John now swirls a finger around the edge of his glass. Tipping and tapping at it as he watches the water form in ringlets. "Yeah, my mother, she doesn't approve."

"Well... I think you're an amazing artist. I'm not just saying that either, you're hella talented." Alex said to him and John's finger stops. He looks to Alex and he actually smiles. "You are! You could make a career out of it."

"You're a good liar" John said to him. Alex's mouth drops open. He isn't lying. John was amazing at his work.

"I'm not!" He cried. Alex walks over to him and as he does, he places a hand gently on John's shoulder. He's warm, his shoulder firm. John's eyes flicker to it and then back to Alex's eyes. "Regardless of what anyone else has ever told you. You're good at what you do. You're talented and don't let anyone ever tell you otherwise. Kay?"
John gives him a little nod and he looks away. His smile now faded. "Okay" He says, sounding small. Alex pats him again before letting go. John's eyes lingering on him for longer this time as he carefully watches Alex's every move around the kitchen.

Alex of course, he could feel them boring holes on his back. He chose not to say anything. It was easier that way, but the chills, they didn't stop.

After dinner Alex resorts to his room and decides on having a nice bath. It's been a long day, he's got the tub filling up and it's humungous. It's dated but still beautiful. The old pattern tiles on the wall could use some seeing to and perhaps a new shower curtain, still it's not too bad. It's nicer than his bathroom at his apartment if he were brutally honest. Alex's was a dump, tiles falling off and there was always a plumbing problem. Eliza used to complain all the time about the sink clogging up.

He was sat on the edge of his bed checking his phone. Alex was glad he could get wifi on his phone from his provider at least - but it wasn't the same as it being on his laptop. Especially since he had so much to do. At least he could get on with his book and reply to emails on his phone. That was something at least.

He has a quick call with his dad, Washington and lets him know he's arrived safely in South Carolina there. Alex has to listen about his mother, Martha's problem with her cat and it eating fish bones, George not being happy that he has a high vet bill on his hands. All the silly small talk. Eventually they let Alex go and he's off for a dip in the bath.

As Alex is stripping off his top, he's humming along to himself, something off the radio when he was in the taxi earlier. He notices the cracks in those tiles, they're really bad and the holes in-between them are disturbing. Alex is slipping off his belt, he's glad to finally have this fucker off, it's been a long day and it falls to the floor with a clatter. His jeans are to come off next.

Alex looks back behind him and makes sure the door is closed. He pulls it shut and locks it with a turn of the latch. It's only him and John in the entire house - it was a huge house but Alex always felt better with the doors shut. When he slept, bathed, used the bathroom. It just gave him that sense of absolute privacy.

He's got his jeans off - kicks them off and then his briefs. Alex finds himself looking around the bathroom as he's fully nude. It's almost like the walls can see him and that he isn't fully alone. He's getting into the bath, the holes beside the bath in their tiles, they really do rub him up the wrong way. Alex tries to ignore it and he gets in. The hot water welcoming his body, pinching at his tensed nerves and muscle.

He tips his head back and he's closing his eyes. No matter how hard he tries, Alex feels like he is being watched.

He pulls the plug five minutes after.
Once Alex is done with the quickest bath in history, he's drying himself and his hair. Ties his hair up in a messy bun, tossing on his old long t-shirt and joggers for bed. Not to mention some socks because this house was draughty now that it was night. The room wasn't that warm either. Alex decides he best check on John, see how he was doing.

Alex found John's room eventually and he knocks before entering. John tells him to come in from the other side of the door and it's already open. Alex pushes it and he's poking his head around the door. John's room is bigger than his. It's got the same arched windows, drape long green curtains, with a window seat, a huge four-poster bed and chase just like his own. There were canvases scattered alongside of the walls, all of John's art piling up. It was much similar to his room, an ensuite and walk in wardrobe. John's walls were a bit more personalised though. He had a desk area which held photographs by the looks of it and a computer.

John was on his bed with a book in hand and he's sketching away from the looks of things. John was already in his pyjamas, well, they're just a t-shirt and some plaid shorts. Alex could see John's arms again, scars on display and even some on his freckled legs there. Alex does his best to ignore them. He shouldn't stare or do anything to make John feel uncomfortable. His mother never mentioned these at all to him. Alex assumed she knew.

He looks up at Alex from it, his curls all damp and loose over his shoulders. They look pretty like that Alex thinks. "Come in" He mutters. So Alex does. He closes the door behind him and walks on over. Alex fidgets his the pockets of his joggers, tucks his hands in and awkwardly looks around. John even has a fire place in his room - Alex was jealous. His didn't and it wasn't warm.

"Hey" Alex coos. "I just thought I'd check on you."

"Why?" John had already gone back to sketching, Alex tried to get a look of it. It looked like the trees from the yard. "My mother tell you to? Don't worry, Alexander. I'm not going to do anything crazy." He huffed. Alex sees John's expression, it had a tinge of hurt to it. Alex takes a seat next to him there.

"No" He tells John. Shaking his head. "I just came to see if you wanted company. That's all. You can call me Alex, by the way." It always felt weird when people used his full name. He wasn't really used to that. Well, the only ones to do so were Eliza and George.

John nods. He's drawing a new tree now, Alex watches as his pencil glides across the page and the delicacy of the way he shades - it's gorgeous. Alex smiled at the sight, then he ends up chuckling. John looked up at him, blankly.

"What's... what's so funny?" He asks sternly.

Alex chuckles even more, he bites his lip as he tries to stop and says, "It's just... ironic really. You're an artist, I'm a writer."

At this John puts his pencil down and sits up properly. "What about it though?"

He turns to Alex and Alex swivels around more so he can face John, he crosses his legs there on the bed. John watches as he does. Mostly his eyes focusing on Alex's groin and then to his face again.

"We both express ourselves through creativity. It's an outlet, isn't it? Makes you feel better, makes you feel alive." Alex says. John is fumbling with the inside of his cheek, he's staring Alex square in
the eyes and dropped his gaze back down to his work. "I mean, I'm no artist. But I get it - that feeling. Makes you feel like it's the closest thing to magic when you do what you love. Am I right?" Alex's soppy side-smile has John's cheeks burning up. He had to admit, Alex was right. John gives an 'mm' in agreement.

John taps the page with his pencil. He's thinking on something.

"What's up?" Alex asked gently.

John turns his head up to him and said, "I want to read your work. If you'll... let me." Alex grins and nods. That's fine.

"Sure, John. Sure." He says and pats John's knee cap playfully.

Then John had to ask. His eyes lit up and it's the first time Alex had seen him look this bright. Despite the room being dimly lit, the lamp on its stand in the corner being the only source of light, Alex can see how John's eyes glitter, his face is lively and he looked happy. Happier.

"Alexander" John says, Alex could hear the nerves in his voice. Alex raises his brow for him to carry on his question. "Can I sketch you?"

Oh, so that was it. Alex shrugs and says 'yeah sure'. So John has him just sat there cool as a cucumber while he starts to draw Alex. John is smiling as he does, as Alex is talking away to him about things, random shit and describes his own life to John, telling him stories. He manages to make John laugh, his laughter is lovely, it's sweet. Innocent and rare Alex decides. He didn't think John got to laugh much.

The way John looked at him, stars there in his eyes, Alex knew this was a start of a friendship. He could trust John.

John didn't have much to really say. Alex assumed he didn't get out much. But that was fine. He didn't mind wittering on about his life in New York or his hell of an upbringing.

"Stay still" John scolds him. "I'm working on your mouth now"

For Alex that wasn't easy. He liked to talk, but he did, for John.

He kept quiet.

After all, John only liked to draw beautiful things.
NEW FRIENDS

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning Alex woke not knowing where he was. His surroundings through blurred vision confused him for a moment or two, then it all came flooding back. He was no longer in New York, in his own bed, cold rushing in through his dodgy window or the banging of neighbours from upstairs.

Nope. He was here, snug as a bug in this huge bed, thick duvets, extra on the side if he felt too chilly and it was quiet. Peaceful. Alex couldn't remember a time he had ever woken up without the blaring of sirens outside, shouting from above or feeling warm in bed. It was new - a good new. Alex stretches there and he decides it's best to get up. He reaches for his phone off the bed's cabinet and as he winces, the screen almost blinding him, Alex makes out that it's just turned eight. Laurens had told him something about not getting up after six. But luckily she wasn't here.

Alex pulls a thankful expression to himself and he's getting up. He remembers John and how John needed doting on. Laurens also told Alex that her son must take his pills too. Alex didn't know what type of pills, he wasn't given an answer when he did ask. He'd been brushed off and that'd been it.

So he takes a quick shower and ignores the eerily broken tiled wall. All those holes, cracks staring at him. Surely there had to be a spare shower curtain somewhere so he could hide them. Alex is getting out, giving himself a good dry, his feet, ass, neck and balls. Throwing on a pair of jeans, a shirt and his beat up converse. Since he wasn't really going anywhere, Alex did want to chance it and wear his slippers or socks. But in a place like this, it didn't feel right. The house was so elegant, Alex knew it would be rude too, especially to John.

He wonders if John is awake yet. Alex goes up to his room, it feels so far away. It's on another floor and these dark hallways didn't help. As Alex walked down them on his own they felt like they could close in on him at any moment. The sun had barely risen yet, it was in the midst of autumn and mornings were darker. The hallway lights didn't do much justice either - they were so dim.

When Alex arrives at John's room, once again it took him another few tries to figure out which it was. Alex memorised it after he had taken a peak inside. John was still soundly asleep in bed. Alex grinned at the sight of him. He looked peaceful, his sleeping face probably held more emotion to it than his default one. John was slumped over his pillow, his mass of curls sprawled all over, some of them in his face, his expression soft as wool. Alex would even go as far to say he looked cute. He bites his lip and shakes his head. He knocks on the door softly to wake him.

"John" Alex calls. "John, c'mon. Up you get."

John begins to stir and he's flopping on his other side, giving his back to Alex. Alex lets the door shut on its own as he sighs, he's coming into the room and over at John's beside. "Don't think so - c'mon you gotta get up. You're lucky I let you sleep this late." Alex grumbles and he's giving John a shake on his shoulder.

"What" John mumbles as Alex continues to shake him. He's slowly batting his eyes open and grumbling. Alex chuckled, so John wasn't a morning person.
"Up" Alex says sharply. He gives John a small poke in his upper arm. Alex is impressed, John's sleeve is rolled up slightly, despite his littered scars, John has lean defined arms at least. Alex has his eyes on them, god some of the gashes looked so deep too. As he did, he noticed John stiffened and Alex looked to him where John was staring right back at him. He may be half-asleep still but he knew Alex had been gawking.

"Right, uh, yeah, you gotta get up" Alex blurts out. He's looking elsewhere and moving his hand off John. God, he felt embarrassed. John was lay there judgingly staring at him and then he's sitting up. Alex decides to move away from him, break the tension, he goes for a little walk around his room, it's big enough and he moves to John's desk space.

There he sees all of John's little nooks and crannies. His little old school toys littering along the desk's shelf. There was plenty of sketchbooks on the side, a cup full of pens and pencils. John had some small car models. Snow globes from different places, Alex spotted photographs lastly there pinned just near his computer. But one stood out the most to Alex, so leaned in further to take a better look at it.

They were at the beach. He saw Eleanor Laurens, she was younger, her lithe figure in a bathing suit, her hair longer and it was down. She was smiling. A tall man Alex assumed must be John's father, white, blonde hair and grinning as he was holding a little girl in his arms. Curly hair, tan and freckles. There was two other boys, one taller and another shorter.

Then John could see another girl, she was a bit older. Her curly ringlet black hair in a messy pony tail, she was licking an ice cream and squinting at the camera in the sun light. Then Alex saw him - John. He was the biggest boy, so Alex assumed he was the eldest. John's face still just as heart shaped, small uppity nose, pitched with freckles and his hair was the lightest out of them all.

A pretty shade of moose brown, his eyes were the only ones that matched his mothers. He was smiling with what appeared to be a turtle in his hands. It was weird to see John without the scars, he looked slightly chubby with his small belly roll, his hair so much shorter, he had the brightness of a child. Alex tilts his head as he takes the image in. The Laurens family.

So when did everything go wrong. It takes Alex a second to realise that he hadn't fully looked at the father's face. He had skimmed over him quickly, all you could see was his blonde hair and tall topless posture. Then Alex noticed - his face was entirely scratched off.

Alex's eyes widen and he's instantly snapped out of it when he hears John call for him. "What are you doing?" Immediately Alex turns to John's way, John is sleepily sat on the edge of his bed, his legs tangled in the sheets and he's rubbing sleep out of his eyes. His curls are all bedridden. Alex shakes his head, he smiles at John and comes over his way again.

"I like your models, those are damn cool." Alex lies. "Especially the little train one, my step-dad, he used to build them too." Washington actually did though. When Alex was a kid, he would get Alex to paint some of the little wheels or windows on the car versions, while he built them.

John twists his mouth as he looks at Alex blankly, like it is supposed to mean something to him. John looks away uninterested. "Are you going to bathe me?" John asks nonchalantly.

It was Alex's turn to look blank faced. "Sorry, what?"

With a slight frown John turns back to him. Alex looked so clueless. He didn't expect this. "You're supposed to wash me" John tells him. "Isn't that what you're here for?"

Alex's brow raised up and he jokingly laughed. "John, wait, what?"
"You heard me" John says and he's already stripping off his top.

Alex takes in his body as he does, John no longer the chubby boy in his photograph. His lean freckled stomach with it's soft 'v' on his groin. Alex could've sworn he had little abs too. His stomach had a couple of scars but not as many as his arms or legs. As he's throwing the top to the side of the bed, John drifts his eyes to Alex with a mischievous gleam in his eyes.

Alex put his hands on his hips, he looked down and shook his eyes as he bit his lip, all while trying not to laugh. John had to be joking. "John, didn't you bath yourself last night? I came in here, your hair was wet still!" Alex cried. "Why would I bathe you, you can obviously do that yourself?" It made no sense at all. Alex wouldn't feel comfortable with that at all. He didn't go around washing grown men. John was old enough to evidently do it himself.

John looked like he could be pouting when Alex looked up and then John's face went back to being blank. He shrugged at Alex. "Well, you start today, officially. You're supposed to be looking after me..." John all but whines.

Alex's brow rose and he had a look of shock on his face. Oh hell no.

"John" Alex begins, he's staring John dead in the eyes now. Alex had a feeling John wasn't used to being told 'no' very often. 'I'm sorry, but, I am not going to bathe you." He's blunt and bold as brass, John's face changes into something ugly. It doesn't suit his delicate features.

"Why?" John argues, much too snippily for Alex's liking. John crosses his legs there on the bed.

With another laugh, Alex roam a hand down the side of his face. Then he goes to adjust his man-bun since it's falling out almost. "Why? Because you're old enough to wash your self!" He chuckled. John's eyes squint and Alex waved him off. His laughter fades and Alex's face grows serious. "Oh my god - you're being serious."

"Why wouldn't I be?" John huffs. "You're taking care of me, that's why my mother is paying you. You're supposed to do what I say."

Alex really didn't want to argue with John. He had a mouth like a rottweiler when he got going and John was too nice, too cute for him to bite his head off. Alex could easily tell John to 'fuck off' and leave him be. But he doesn't. So he sighs, aloud. John is sat there frowning like a child at him. "Tell you what, you go and have yourself a quick wash. I'll make us some breakfast?" Alex says, softly. Because if he shouts, John will probably cry. "Deal?"

John is slipping out the tie from his hair and allowing it to fall loose. God it's so long. He gives it a good scratch too and rolls his eyes at Alex. "Whatever"

So with that Alex gives John a thumbs up and he slips out of his room, leaving John to bathe himself. He wasn't a baby. Alex figured the Laurens children must've had maids at some point to take care of such needs. But the guy was well over twenty, he didn't really needed a caretaker. That was also when Alex recalled John had to take his pills too. His mother had shown Alex where they were kept. He hadn't seen them yet though, Alex decided when John came downstairs for breakfast he could take them then.

Alex whipped up a couple of sausages, some eggs, bacon and toast for them. He had to laugh, living here did have its perks. No rent, free food and water. Plus being away from the internet was doing Alex the world of good. He could happily get on with his book in peace too, since John was a hermit to his art room. Things would be fine. After he's got everything on the plate, Alex is buttering up the toast and he looks over his shoulder when he hears padded footsteps.
John was there and dressed. Alex wanted to give him a big gold star for that alone. He looked nice, his hair up in a tight bun, green sweater, his little chinos and belt. It was too preppy for Alex's taste but John looked good. Alex shoots him a smile and jokes, "Ah, so you do know how to get dressed then. Holy fuck." John flutters his eyes at him, a frown and he's turning moodily away from Alex. He takes a seat there at the island in the middle of the kitchen. Alex rolls his eyes to himself, so it was like that then.

"Right, I've got us some breakfast here" and he's putting John's plate down infront of him. John immediately brushes it away with his arm. Alex's jaw dropped because at the force he pushed it, the plate almost fell off the side.

Alex luckily enough grabs it, some of the hot sausages roll on his own wrist and burn him. He shoves the plate back on the island top and winces, he's shaking his hand out. John rests his chin in his hands there, he's watching Alex intently with a mean gleam in his eyes. Alex decides that John is not at all very friendly.

"The fuck was that for?!" He can't help himself. Alex really can't. John perks up his head, snootily and Alex is sure he can see a little smirk on John's lips. "John! Why would you do that?"

He snorts at Alex. Actually fucking snorts and Alex snarls at him. "I didn't want that for breakfast." He says wearily. As if it strained him despite the fact that John isn't even the one who cooked.

"What?"

John snorts again. "You never asked me. You just assumed I would want that. It's like I said, you're looking after me. You're supposed to do what I tell you." That's no doubt the most he had ever spoken to Alex in one full sentence. Alex snaps out of it and he crosses his arms angrily.

"I just busted my ass off for you!" Alex hisses. "You should've told me!"

"You never asked me, though, did you?" John pushes. A cocky glimmer in his eyes that Alex didn't like. He narrows his own at John and John raises his brow in a challenging manner.

Alex shakes his head, he's muttering to himself and he swoops up John's plate. He knows what this is about, John is just annoyed at him and he's acting like a little brat. All because he didn't get his own way. Alex chucks the food into the trash and goes to wash the plate. John watches him from his seat and he's drumming his fingers. "Well I'm very fucking sorry, your highness. I thought you were partial to a bit of sausage now." Alex instantly kicks himself in the backside when he spurts that and regrets it.

"What was that?" John bites back.

"You heard" Alex hissed.

He could've sworn that John's fists just hunched up. He was shaking.

"What? You want to say that again?"

Oh, so the kid could get lippy. Alex turns to him, he's got his back to the sink and leans against its counter.

He holds a hand up to John. "I didn't mean that. Shit. I'm sorry."

John is about to stand up, he's pissed off, Alex could tell. He shouldn't have said that. As John gets
up, the chair making a hideous scraping noise as he does. "You're just like the rest..." He mumbles. Alex storms over to him and he's grabbing John by his wrist. John stiffens and he looks to Alex.

"That was uncalled for - John and I apologise. But you keep messing me around. First that shit with the bath and now this? I'm just trying to do my job, you're not making it any easier." Alex tells him firmly. His grasp on John's arm tightens. John bites his lip. "I know I'm supposed to take care of you, I will do. I promise. But you have to understand, John, you can't treat people like they're your doormat. You've probably had everything done for you, hand and foot growing up. I get it."

John's gaze dropped from Alex's and he slowly sits back down. "This is the first time I've ever done this kind of job. I'm a writer, for gods sake. It isn't easy for me either and I'm miles away from home too. I will help you, any way I can, John. But there are boundaries."

This time John doesn't argue. He simply nods along. "Okay" He says quietly. "I'm sorry too."

Alex lets him go, gently and John's eyes fall to Alex's fingers. Longingly in a way. Alex nods and then he goes to tapping his fingers on the counter there as silence overtakes them. "What do you want to eat then?"

John's eyes scoot to the trash. Alex lets out an 'oh my god' and John's mouth twitches. "Are you for real? After me just throwing it away? Jesus christ, John."

"Hey... you threw it away. Not me." John says scarcely.

"I thought you didn't - you told me! You said you didn't want it!" John goes back to resting his chin in his hands, his palms curling up over his mouth and Alex could tell he was smiling. "You're so bad, here I was. Thinking you were innocent too."

Then what caught Alex off guard was when John says, "Who said I was?" That had Alex shaking his head. John was unbelievable. But the pair of them smiled.

Alex told him it was no problem, he gave John his own breakfast and threw on a couple of slices of bacon for himself. It wasn't a big deal. Alex saw John scoff the entire lot too, he must've been starving. John was coming out of his shell more because he was eating like a race horse and he was bothering to make conversation too. That was a first.

He kept his eyes on Alex the whole time he ate too, asking him questions about New York, about his book, about adoption and foster care. For John it was a new world, he always had a family. He had money, Alex knew that John would inherit the entire land and house, it would be worthy of millions. John had talent too. If he had to be honest, Alex could quite happily say he was jealous in a way.

Being given everything and never having to work for it. Eliza's family was the same, money given from past grandparents, antiques worth tons and properties gifted by some long lost relative. How easy it was for some.

Then there was Alex, not even a photograph of his own dead mother. Just the memory he had to rely on.

"What about your mother?" John asks him, he's lapping one of his chopped sausages and bit of egg around the grease there on the plate.

Alex finished swallowing and said, "What about her?"

John looked back to him, the fork at his mouth. Alex noted even with the piggery John ate with, he
still ate with such manners and his bites were delicate. "What happened to her? Did you ever find her again?" He boldly asked. Alex's face drops but he tries to hold a smile. Just to keep the tears at bay. Alex hated talking about her after all.

"No" He tells John. "She died when I was really young." John's eyes held sympathy, Alex could tell and he nods at his answer.

There was a pause. Their chewing being the only sound to come from them both. Then John swallows and says, "My father, he's dead. My sister, Martha, she died too." Alex didn't know what to say. John shrugs like it's nothing and goes back to eating.

"I'm sorry" Alex says.

John wafts a hand to him, he's still chewing before he responds. "It's been years. It's fine." John says it like it's the weather, unbothered and cold. Even though Alex doesn't know John's sister or father, it rubs him up the wrong way a little. Alex liked to think it just pained John though. Perhaps that was why he was the way he was.

"You got a girl back in New York?" John asks, his southern accent shining through as he does. Alex chuckles to himself. They sounded so different.

He darts his eyes to John and John's were playful. He's chomping away.

Alex shakes his head. "Nah, I don't. Used to." Well he wasn't lying. John hums as he listened. "Well, she still could've been, but, shit happens. That's just life I guess."

He's in his trail of thoughts about Eliza and the baby. He hadn't told John about the miscarriage - it wasn't needed. John didn't need to know. But Eliza - Her bloody red hands, the little squishy blob in her palms and how they dug a hole for it in their favourite park. Planting their little baby in a small flannel, baby animals embroidered on it. Alex had covered it up with soil and Eliza had sprinkled a few rose seeds on top. Eliza said a little sobbed prayer and Alex remained frozen.

A clang.

Alex looks over, he is shaken up by John stabbing a piece of sausage there on his plate with such a racket. His hand balled up in a tough grip and his face even colder. "John?" Alex asked. John turns to him, he looked to Alex and smiled.

"Sorry, just hungry. That's all." He says, a little too happily than he looked. Alex continued with his bacon sandwich and decided to change the subject.

After breakfast and when Alex finished washing up. Not that John offered to bother helping, he sits there, staring into space and occasionally watching Alex. Alex tells John he has to take his pills and John points the the cupboard they're kept in. Alex gets out the box and John practically pushes him aside to get in it first. He bosses Alex around saying 'cup, water' and Alex is grated by the fact that John can never say 'please' or even give thanks. He was definitely going to knock that habit out of him one way or another.
John takes his pills, Alex takes the bottle they're in and it's got no label. "What're these anyway?"

After he takes them, John snatches it off him and replies, "Vitamins, I've got a deficiency." Alex gives an 'mm' but he doesn't quite believe it. So knew he shouldn't push and pry, but he does and he has to.

"What are they really for John?"

John sighs after he's finished pushing the box back into the cupboard. "Why does it matter?"

"Because I want to know what they are. You're twenty-one years old, you shouldn't be on medication!" Alex gripes. John narrows his brow and he tilts his head back in defeat. "I won't judge you. I grew up around kids and older kids with more problems than you can imagine -"

"I'm problematic now?" John mutters. Trust John to turn it around and make him look like the bad guy, again.

Alex balled his eyes. "No, I'm not saying that. Look, I am not a judgemental person. Incase you haven't noticed, I'm an open book. I've told you all about my shitty life, from A to fucking Z. It ain't pretty either." John heaves another sigh. He's scratching the back of his nape, a bitter look on his face. "John, are you on anti-depressants?"

"Yeah" John says almost immediately. "Well... these are stronger. Supposed to help, they kind of work. I hate taking them, but my mother, she says I can't go without them." His mother was hellbent on making sure he took them. Alex remembered.

So Alex shrugged. "Cool, that's fine. Long as you take them."

John has his head lowered for a moment. "You don't think, it's weird, right?" John asks him in a small voice. Alex's brow crumpled and he gives John a playful shove on the shoulder. John mustn't be used to really being touched since he practically jumps. Alex withdraws his hand and puts it back in his pocket. He laughs it off awkwardly while John remains staring at him surprised.

"Don't be stupid. John, so many people take them. If they help you, they help. Like I said, I don't judge. Now, we good?" John nods. He still looked unsure and Alex gave him a little bump into his shoulder. He had to get this guy out of his shell. "C'mon, I'll show you what I've been working on. Promised you, right?"

John is dragged by Alex back upstairs, Alex has him by the sleeve, tugging him forwards and they're in Alex's guest room. Sat on Alex's bed and Alex goes through some of his work there on his macbook. John seemed to like Alex's macbook, he hadn't seen this edition before and he liked that is was a pretty gold colour. John also seemed nosey enough to look at Alex's things.

Alex was reading some of his story out, John said he was listening, all while he was having a good wander at Alex's graphic tops, flickering through some of his books he brought with him, asking who was who on the cover of magazines and squirting out some of Alex's cologne into the air before sniffing it. Alex giggled at his curiosity. It had him wondering -

"John, do you ever go out? Like, out into the city?" Alex asked him. John is sat on the end of the bed, he's still flickering through of the books and looking at the pictures. His fingers tracing the lines of the illustrations. Alex imagined he was gathering inspiration or some sort. John never really spoke about his work. It was there but he didn't speak about it.

But at his question, John shakes his head silently. "Why?" Alex asked. He's adjusting his pillow behind him there against the headboard and balancing the laptop on his lap. John shifted and
turned to him.

John moved a stray curl out of his face, Alex noticed how some of them were tousled at his nap, some at the side of his ears. His bun of long unruly curls scraped together was so neat and perfect. Alex was quite impressed. But John really did have pretty hair. Alex couldn't keep his eyes off it he found sometimes.

"I used to" John tells Alex. His eyes still on the book's images. "Not anymore, I don't like going out. Sometimes I go out on the grounds, I prefer to stay near home. This is where I belong." Alex can't help but feel sad at the way John ended that last part. John looked paler than he should be, his eyes had circles underneath if you really squinted. He needed to get out.

Alex puts his laptop aside for a second. "John, maybe we should go into Charleston this week." Alex tells him. John shoots him a frown. "It'll do you good, you shouldn't lock yourself away."

John turns from him again. He doesn't see Alex roll his eyes but Alex shuffles forward to him there at the end. He gives John a small poke in his knee cap. "We could go to The Charleston Museum" Alex recommends, he pokes John again. "See some art, we could get food. I bet the food down here is amazing." Another poke and this time, it's in John's ribs and he flinches. "You might even see a cute guy -"

"Stop" John warns him. He doesn't look too angry but he seemed irritated. "I don't want to go anywhere. I want to stay here, at home. Now drop it Alexander."

"Just try John" Alex presses on.

John's eyes flicker up dangerously. "Drop it" He grits.

Alex holds up his hands defensively and pulls a face as he does. John snubs him and he stands up off the bed. He has the magazine still in hand.

"What's your deal? Damn, you're so angry." Alex says snapily. He's tired of pussyfooting around John and being nice. Alex slams his hands down on his thighs, the sound causing John to look down at him there. "I can't win with you. Everything I say... it's like talking to a fucking brick wall. All I want to do is help! Just let me be a friend to you!"

Immediately John tosses the magazine at Alex, right in his face with such force, Alex flinches and John is already bolting out the room.

Alex calls out for him but John is already gone and he slams the door behind him. Alex leans back on the bed in frustration and groans aloud. "What the fuck is wrong with him" Alex mutters. "Holy shit"

After that outburst Alex bides his time in his room, he tries to do some writing for his book but he can't get into it at all. He thinks back to John. Alex knows he shouldn't push John, he seemed delicate and he wasn't used to people. It was only day one as well, he didn't want to offend him and Alex really did want to get to know him better. John needed someone and Alex wanted to be that person.

He rubs his the stubble on his chin and sighs. He has an idea and opens up a new document. Alex's fingers get to work, tapping away there and he reads through what he's wrote. Hopefully this may bring John around - if not, Alex didn't know what else would.

It's a short poem, short but sweet. He didn't know John that well but rather than already knowing him, Alex made a list of reasons why he wanted to know him. He gave it a couple of hours just so
John could pipe down. Calm himself.

Then Alex grabs his laptop and he's walking to John's art room. Of course, he was right. John was there. John was sat with his back facing the door, he was working on something and Alex doesn't decide to knock this time. Instead he starts with "John" and John, he stops what he was doing. Alex sees a pencil dropping. He's got his attention.

Once Alex has finished his short poem of 'John' that was when John fully turned around there on his stool. Alex gives him a wonky smile, he hoped he could be forgiven. They had six months together and they needed to get along. "Alexander, that was -" John says softly, his hazel eyes glimmered. "Thank you" and he smiled. Actually smiled back at Alex. When Alex went on over to John's work table, he saw that John had been sketching him from memory. It was amazing, Alex recognised himself immediately.

It was so life-like, the gradient perfect and John even captured the small scar under his lip from his old lip ring. That made Alex think - either John had a photographic memory or he looked at him too much. Still, it was nice and they both chuckled together. How ironic was it that they both thought about each other during their three hour fall out.

"You, John Laurens" Alex begins as he's placing his laptop down and taking a seat on the desk. Mindful of John's works that were hoarded on there. He's looking down at John with a wondrous expression. John staring back up at him, leaning forward, he was such a jubilicious little thing. "You really are full of surprises."

John is the one to poke Alex this time, he does it in his thigh. He bursts into a hiccup of light laughter. "What's funny?" Alex asks him.

"Just... us. You writing me poetry, me, drawing you. Us trying to make up I guess." John says with a wonky smile. Then his eyes went wide and he's looking back to the drawing. "Shit! I got your nose wrong -" John says and he's grabbing his eraser, Alex nudges him with his leg. John looks back to him.

Alex shakes his head. "Leave it, it's perfect."

It was nice to see John smile. Alex thought he had a pretty smile. It complimented his delicate features and a pair of dimples to boot. That was when John shifts there on his stool and he holds out his hand. "Hi, I'm John Laurens. I'm kind of a pain in the ass, I like turtles, also I love to draw and paint a lot. But I hope, we can be friends. I want to be your friend." Alex looked taken a back, this was so sudden of John and so bold. Alex's face was a picture and he chuckled along. He takes John's hand and grips it, it's soft.

"John Laurens, I am Alexander Hamilton. Alex. I'm a writer, I love to cook, I have a soft spot for musicals, I talk too much and I want to be a lawyer." John bites his lip and he smiles as he does. Their hands break slowly and Alex is certain John kept it lingering that bit longer. Maybe he was just overthinking though. "And I would love to be your friend."

John's face was Christmas morning.
John ended up writing the poem down Alex wrote of him. He put it inside one of his special sketchbooks. The first day ended on a good note, John finally let his guard down, not completely but enough for him not to come across too much of an asshole. Alex stopped pushing questions on John and let it be.

Their first week together ended up being not too bad. It did get boring being in doors a lot, Alex had to take strolls around the mansion, some days he would go alone and walk around it or write outside on one of the beaches. John usually found a window to hang out of and call him. Wave and watch him, he sat there sometimes and Alex assumed John would draw him.

John was always drawing Alex after that. Whenever they hung out together - John always had that sketchbook at bay and a pencil. Alex either had his laptop or a book. But Alex was hellbent on getting them both out into Charleston in the coming weeks. John needed to see the world. He was too roped up here, in this house, this land. Alex found it suffocating and it hadn't been the full duration of six months yet. There was no way he could stay around this place for six solid months.

Alex never told John but he pitied him in a sense. Never going anywhere, a good looking, young, man at that. John could easily find himself a man if he really tried, then again, Alex remembered it was South Carolina. Slim pickings when half the state was still very much against interracial marriage, let alone gay couples. But still, he was going to help John.

During the second week Alex and John got closer. John was more open now, he could start off a conversation when Alex wasn't the one to talk first or when things fell silent. He usually joined Alex in his bedroom, they would stay up late when John wasn't supposed to. John said he liked him because he got away with a lot of things and Alex extended his bed time, until two or three am.

But Alex was a writer, he was up all hours. While Alex would type away and talk to John, he sometimes had John fall asleep beside him. It was the cutest thing. Alex was always tempted to ruffle his hair, he didn't incase it woke John. Then one night he found himself twitching and giving in. His fingers interwinding through soft silky curls. John reminded him of one of the curly haired kids from his upbringing in care, they used to sleep next to him too and cry in their sleep. Alex would always soothe them, he'd do the same. Fingers in, twirl their curls and let them bounce back to their coils.

During the third week, Alex managed to drag John on the outskirts of the mansion's land. They went for a long walk together, the autumn breeze whisking, all the crumpled beautiful yellow and orange leaves crunching under their feet. It was beautiful where they were, a sea of high trees swallowing them from above, their bare and half-full branches on display. The pathway was long, Alex had no idea where they were going, John knew.

He told Alex that he and his siblings would go on walks together around here growing up. Alex found out that the Laurens's used to have a dog, a gorgeous golden retriever named Sandy. They would take him for runs up here, have him crash into a mountain pile of leaves, while John's little brother and sister would join Sandy. All of them laughing, happy.

Alex noted the way John looked as he spoke about them, his memories. John's face was soft, he didn't have that blank expression anymore and his voice was warm. In face since the first day of John and Alex not getting along, John completely knocked down his stoic wall. He was friendlier, laughed and spoke more. Before then, Alex didn't think he was capable. But what ever happened to John must've affected him badly. Bullying.

Despite his bright eyes and wide dimpled smiles, Alex still remembered John's body, the scars. His medication. His father's face scratched out on that old photograph in his room. Alex always tried to shove it at the back of his mind and focus on the current John. He could help John get his life back.
Their walk lasted up to three hours. Alex enjoyed seeing the woodland, the small lakes with their lily pads glimmering with the afternoon sun. New York was a whole different world. South Carolina was peaceful and Alex thought it was doing him the world of good. To be away from the city, the sirens, the neighbours fighting, the stress of deadlines and subway screeching. John was telling him something about what one of his younger brother's did once, something about making a swing rope and tying it to a tree by one of the lakes. How in the summer time, he, his brothers and younger sister would take turns on it. Fall into the lake and use it as their own personal waterpark.

Another gust of cold wind rushed past them and as it did, Alex looked to John, his curls come loose out of their bun and they're blowing furiously in the wind. The sunlight in his face, John turns to Alex and his hazel eyes sparkle. Brown and green jewels glittering under long lashes. Alex is captivated by the sight of him for a second. John is paler than he should be but he looked beautiful.

Alex blinked and turned away. All the thoughts in his head were scrambled, John Laurens, one of the most ridiculously gorgeous men Alex had ever met. He took his own hair tie out of his hair and offered it to John since he had longer hair. John accepted it with a small smile and laughed awkwardly. Their fingers brushing.

After their ordeal outdoors they go back to the house and Alex makes them both some hot drinks. A piping hot cup of black coffee for himself and a mug of hot chocolate for John with lots of cream. It's freezing by sun down and John shows Alex how to light up the fireplace, since Alex had no clue. The thing was dated to hell.

John seemed to be fine doing things himself which is what bothered Alex. John was fine. He could do things by himself, he was pretty damn smart too. Alex could have an intellectual conversation with him, no problem. Yet he needed a caretaker. It made no sense.

Then on the fourth week, John and Alex did visit the city. Alex dragged John out into Charleston, he couldn't bare watch John loaf around his room and the art room any longer. So Alex has him out there around other people. It wasn't like New York, it wasn't too crowded or busy. But there were enough people and Alex was a people person. He liked being around others.

John kept close to him, Alex wondered when John's agoraphobia started. He didn't ask though and Alex tried to keep John occupied by talking, he had to. It kept John from becoming a nervous wreck in public. He obviously looked uncomfortable, John there right at his side, his shoulders brushing against Alex and he looked nervous. Alex tells him it's fine and that he was there, John appeared calmer after that.

Alex managed to get them to the Charleston museum after asking around. John told Alex he used to come to this museum during his childhood, he loved to walk around and look at the art. They spent a few hours walking around, Alex wasn't really that interested in it and told John his work was better than everything in there. John's cheeks flustered, his freckles more prominent and he stared in awe at Alex. Biting his lip and just accepting that someone was trying to be good to him. Not mock him, not bully or belittle him. John tells Alex that he's the nicest person he had ever met. Alex laughed and told John to stop dicking around. John wasn't and his sharp eyes told Alex that as well.

After their trip together they stop at some local cafe. It looked lovely, pretty pastel flowers handing from the door and windows. They apparently did authentic southern food and Alex wanted to try it. John found it amazing how someone from New York hadn't ate anything southern. To John it was normal and he laughed seeing Alex gush over crispy tender chicken, biscuits, greens and gravy. John even ended up sharing with Alex since he couldn't finish it.

Eating a shared grizzly biscuit soaked in gravy and fried pieces of chicken had never made Alex
It had been a full month already. Alex couldn't believed how fast it went. Now leaving just five months to go and it was nearing closer to Halloween.

Alex had never really been that big of a fan when it came to Halloween. All Hallows Eve.

He didn't get the whole point of dressing up in cheap tacky dollar costumes, he found it astonishing when people paid over a hundred just to look like Batman or Spiderman. It was ridiculous. Kids basically were begging, that was all Trick or Treating was.

Begging and Alex blamed Halloween for kids going missing each year, because how dare a parent be incompetent enough to allow their six year old to run around the neighbourhood, in the cold, in a shitty costume, knock on a stranger's door and ask for candy. Also Alex just hated scary things in general, horror films he didn't like, scary novels or games. He didn't like them. Alex had gone through enough nightmares in his life as it is.

So when Alex told John he couldn't stand Halloween, John's eyes sprang open, wide, like golf balls.

"Are you being serious?" John asked him, his voice shocked.

Alex was typing away, sipping at his black coffee as he did there on his bed. Alex and John always preferred to lounge around upstairs, rather than the downstairs. John always told Alex he didn't like being downstairs very often, unless it was for dinner.

"Fuck yeah" Alex said. He backspaces rapidly. John is drawing another pumpkin design, he had around fifty of them scribbled there. "It's just... what's the point of it? Kids running around screaming 'Trick or treat' making a racket." John chuckled at Alex's high voice impression. "Fucking tacky haunted house decorations, dodgy costumes and dressing up like creepy ass characters. I mean, the hell is that all about?"

John nudges Alex's socked foot there with his pencil. Alex nudges John back in his leg.

"I just don't get it" Alex tells him, with a sigh. John puts down his sketchbook and shuffled up the bed to him.

"It's just for fun" John says and shrugs. Alex shoots John a look. John rolls his eyes. "You've never celebrated Halloween, have you?"

Alex pulls a smug smile at him. "Actually I have - so ha!"

"Whoa, you have?" John mocked and he grins. "So you're telling me, you didn't have a little bit of fun?"

"Well it was my pal Angelica's party, she threw it. Her family has shit tons of cash, they have a big house, not as big as yours mind. But they did a Halloween bash at their joint. I kind of had no choice but to go." Alex tells him.
John pouts and grumbles an 'mm'. Alex suddenly remembers, John didn't seem to have many friends. Maybe it bothered him when he spoke about his friends. Sometimes Alex did bring them up and John usually went quiet. His face faltering, "What about you? You been to any Halloween parties? Y'know, since you're the one who is actually into Halloween." He just has to ask.

John shakes his head, as he moves a curl out of his face, he smiles softly. "No, I haven't. I was homeschooled remember." Alex only nods. He remembers John telling him something along those lines. "Me, my brothers and sisters, as kids we used to. Just personal ones. We have always done Halloween. It's a family thing. I mean, my mother wasn't all for it and my father -" John pauses for a second, Alex sees the way John almost scowls but he keeps forcing this smile.

"He didn't care for it much either. So we would just have Halloween parties in one of our rooms, we would talk our parents into buying us stuff. They didn't care I guess. But I have never been to a party with people who weren't my brothers or sisters."

Alex's heart swells and he feels for John. Alex's fingers stop tapping and they go stiff. John has his eyes lost into a space in the room, he's blank faced again and the look in his eyes was dimmed of any sparkle.

"John" Alex starts. "Can I ask something?"

John makes a soft 'mm' and so Alex slowly asks, "Where exactly are your brothers and sisters?" He already knew one of them died but Alex didn't know if John had any more he didn't know about. John turns to him, he smiled again at Alex and he's crossing his legs then leaning back

"My younger brothers, James, Henry they're at a boarding school up north. My sister, Mary, she is studying in England. Martha, she was born after I was, she was three years younger than me. She's dead." John delightfully says.

Alex puts his laptop aside on the pillow next to him, god he feels bad for asking now. "Shit, John I'm sorry for asking but -"

"Alexander it's fine" John tells him. "You can ask questions, it's alright. She's been dead years. I kind of knew you wanted to know about them all, I was waiting for you to ask me. I'm not made out of fine china, I won't break." Alex and John kept their gaze. Alex wasn't so sure about that though. John was fragile.

John saw the way Alex looked at him and John drops his gaze. He lets out a hefty sigh and he's rolling up one of his sleeves, Alex's eyes widen and he goes to stop him but John rolls up the other sleeve anyway. "You've been wondering about these, too, huh?" John said to him.

Alex's hand drops and he leans back again on the headboard. They're already there on display for them both. John traces one of the scars, it was a smaller one, the skin a light pink and although it looked smaller, it looked so painful. Alex's brow furrowed when John played with it.

"This was the first one I did, I'll always remember it." John says. Completely unfazed. "School was rough that day, I hated it. You know what, it was actually near Halloween when I did this too."

Then he looked up to Alex and gave a breathy laugh. "Weird, right? I was just really overwhelmed but it was the only thing that made me feel better. Then my mother found out, Mary told her because she'd seen it and I had to tell my parents about the bullying."

Alex subconsciously fingers one of the keys there on his keyboard as he listened. John stared at Alex's glum expression, he didn't like Alex not looking. So he shoved his arms practically in Alex's
face and it catches him off guard. "John!"

"Oh don't act like you haven't noticed. Alexander, I've caught you staring at them lots of times. I'd rather you just ask me, don't pretend you don't see them." John mutters and he's pushing his ugly scars in Alex's view, when Alex tries to turn, John leans over on his stomach and puts them the same way Alex goes. Eventually Alex just stops and takes them in. "They're real, they're right here. Look at them."

"John, I don't want to -" Alex tries to look away one last time and John grabs Alex's shoulder.

"John!"

Then John shakes him. "Just look"

So in the end, Alex does. There were so many of them. His face turns sad and John lets go of him.

"Did it hurt?" It was a stupid question to ask, Alex knew that. John looks at him with an odd expression before bursting out laughing. He withdrew back on his knees in front of Alex as he did.

"Well, yeah. But at the time? It was the best feeling ever. It helped so much." John says quietly. Alex stared at him with his mouth agape.

John rolls his eyes and leans back there on his side. His myriad of scars still on show.

"Don't look at me like that. I'm not going to start up doing it again, if that's what you're thinking. These are from when I was still in middle school. But my mother thinks I'm deprived, deranged. She thinks I belong in a unit or something." John huffed. "She even said so herself."

Alex shakes his head. He knew Eleanor Laurens wasn't all that nice.

John tilts his head and he's balling his eyes for the millionth time.

"She looks like a sweet little lady, but in reality, she's a cunt." John throws out.

Alex murmurs out an 'oh my god John' because he had actually called his own mother that.

Alex hated that word. It went through him like chalk on a board. John chuckled and he pokes Alex in his leg there. "What? I can't stand her. You saw the way we speak to each other. She doesn't like me much either."

Alex takes back his macbook and places it back on his lap. This book wasn't going to write itself. John remained staring at him.

"So, I take it you never got on with your parents?" Alex asked and he's leaning over the side of the bed, he forgot his glasses. They're there in his duffle bag on the floor. He doesn't see John frown.

"What gives you the impression that I never got on with my father though?" John asked back. His frown fades when Alex sits back up and Alex slips on his glasses.

Alex takes them off again, he grunts when he sees that they're mucky. So he uses the bottom of his top to rub them. "Well we weren't close. He was difficult to live with, difficult to love." John tells him, Alex hears how little his voice became. John looked as if he were torn up inside. His brow crushing together and his pretty eyes empty. Alex watched him from over the laptop screen. John was beautifully
I'm sure they cared for you John. Your mother still does at least and I'm sure your pops did too." Alex tries to sound reassuring. "I mean, if your mother didn't care, she wouldn't have got me here to mind you. Now, would she?"

John nuzzled into the soft sheets there and he just looked sadder. "Alexander, if she cared, she would've been here herself." He tells Alex. "You don't know what it's like, to be raised with nannies, maids -"

Alex's eyes shot to him. "You guys had maids and nannies?!"

"And tutors. We had everything. But when my father died, my mother got rid of them. Maybe it just wasn't the same with him gone, I don't know. She never told us." John says. "I'm glad they're all gone."

Alex was still shocked that they had all these services on hand and foot. But then again, the Laurens household was huge and a team of people looking after them all would have probably been needed. Perhaps John's mother wanted to step in and look after her children herself after the death of her husband Alex thinks.

"Hey, you've got me here with you now. It's cool, alright? All that bad shit, it's done with." Alex tells John. John is giving him puppy eyes almost. He did look ever so sad, vulnerable and Alex was going to fix it.

"You don't have to be alone, anymore, John. Hell - you're not on your own. Listen, fuck, if it'll cheer you up and make things better, we'll go get a pumpkin. One of the biggest fuckers on the market, we'll carve it, eat a pile of crappy food, we can watch those stupid horror movies and just have a good time. Together." Alex said as he's grinning. John's mouth immediately quirked into a smile. He laughed as he did.

John sat up at this and he scuffles over next to Alex. He leans against the headboard with him and chuckled all while staring into Alex's big brown eyes. "That sounds... nice" John gently says. Alex pokes him on the end of his nose.

"I'm not dressing up though, fuck no."

At this John laughs all the more.

"You're no fun" He gets a strand of Alex's fine hair near his ear and tugs it. John had meant to do it lightly but ended up doing it too hard.

Alex winces. "Ow!"

"Sorry" He sang, he didn't sound very sorry though. "Okay. But I get to carve the pumpkin, I'm amazing at carving them." Alex could already tell. He didn't need John to let him know that. John was an artist.

"Fine, so I'm scooping out the nasty shit inside it?" Alex scoffed. "Geez, thanks."

John perked up an elbow there on the headboard, his palm against his cheek and he's smiling. "Alexander, have you ever carved one before?"

"Once!" Alex says as he's putting a finger up. John didn't look moved by that. "I did! When I was a kid, obviously. As if I'm gonna spend five bucks on a pumpkin for myself."
"You'll do it for me though?" John pushes, he's smirking. Actually smirking. Alex's eyebrows rose up at this.

Alex scoffed again and turns from him back to his screen. "Don't push it"

"Mm, so you would. Great. Okay, I'm good with a knife. Leave the carving to me." John adds and he sees Alex expression. John sighs aloud. "Not like - you know what I mean!"

"I do" Alex chuckled back. "Right, we'll get a fucking pumpkin. You're carving, end of."

John takes that same strand of Alex's hair again by his ear and this time he tucks it behind it. Alex can feel his fingers dip behind, they're soft and John is gentle the way he does it too. Everything John does always seems to have some grace to it. Alex can feel his heart speed up as he does, it's silly really.

There was a tinge of silence after that apart from Alex typing. His keyboard's tapping filling the room. That was when John broke it and crudely spat, "I think I'll carve... a big cock."

Alex then sat back and he's got his hands over his face. "Oh my christ"

John laughed aloud. "I'm joking!"

Although Alex had to laugh with him at that one. He liked this cheeky side of John.

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Just the day before Halloween John and Alex headed back out into Charleston. There was a pumpkin patch not too far out, as much as Alex didn't care much for the holiday. He was happily joining in on the Halloween spirit when he saw just how many people were. Even John was fine with the amount of people around them, the excitement and thrill must've eased his nerves.

There were all types of people. Old couples, groups of friends, little kids running around, teenagers laughing with their friends and couples together picking pumpkins. There was a field maze too, a petting zoo and some other attractions, thus food stands. John found it hilarious that Alex had never been to a pumpkin patch before.

John told Alex that he would always go to them growing up, he tells Alex some of the Halloween related stories and dumb things he did with them just to make the night that extra bit fun. Even if it was running down the halls in a sheet, John carrying his little sister Mary on his shoulders while they scared the living shit out of both Henry and James. Their screams resulting in waking up half the house.

The giant pumpkin there kids are having their pictures taken, John points to it and he giddily pulls Alex along to it. They wait until the kids have finished having pictures taken by their parents, Alex awkwardly casting them smiles as they're walking over to this giant pumpkin and John is grabbing out his phone. Alex was always surprised knowing John had a phone, an actual phone. He never used it much, the thing was constantly sat in his room.

Since John had no one to really call and he couldn't get wifi on it either back at home. But he's happy, he's beaming and Alex smiles too. John adjusts his green scarf and Alex his red beanie.
They take a few pictures and then Alex took his turn, used his phone and got another selfie of them both.

John looked content having being able to use his phone for the first time in forever and have someone to take pictures with. Alex felt almost bad for him. But his mood brightened when John showed Alex that he had made their selfie his home screen. That was sweet.

Everything was going well, they picked a nice pumpkin. It was medium sized, perfectly curved, smooth and orange. No flaws. It even still had the cute little curly stalk, John found it adorable and played with it as they exit the pumpkin patch. After grabbing some hot drinks they decided to call it a day.

Their day ends well and as they're speaking among each other, walking out the fields, three little kids ran past them both. Two of them bumped into John, purposely.

Little girls laughing and one of them made a mean remark about John's 'girly long hair'. Alex told them to go away and get back to their parents. He looked to John and John couldn't have looked anymore murderous.

Another girl runs past him, knocking into him and this time, John kicks out his leg and the girl goes flying there on the grovel pathway. She's cut her knee and Alex is whispering 'oh shit'. John stamps on her hand as he's walking on. The girl is screaming and he tells Alex to hurry up.

The other girls are at the bottom of the pathway by now, watching, clearly frightened and Alex follows John quickly. They pass the other girls there, one of them snakily says "I'm going to tell my mommy on you!" and John gets his pumpkin, goes as if he is about to throw it right in her face, it doesn't but she flinches anyway and he smirks as he walks off. Alex is still talking in the situation as they're walking away from the farm together.

Although Alex tells John that he may have been too harsh. John didn't seem to think so and he showed no remorse apart from say "The little bitch deserved it" before laughing to himself. "Did you see their faces? Hilarious."

Alex brushed it off.

The next day on Halloween John and Alex spent the day decorating Alex's bedroom. John had found some of the old decorations he and his siblings used to use from his attic, tassel with ghost designs and black cats on them. Some fake cob webs to put up on the posters of Alex's bed. The little trio of skull heads that made noises but didn't work anymore because they needed batteries. He even found some old Halloween themed mugs, glasses and bowls.

They had picked up some Halloween themed snacks from a local Target and set them out. John scolded Alex for dipping into the bowl of ghost shaped chips before their little party had began. Alex rolled his eyes and called John a perfectionist. With the wifi being non-existent in the whole house, John luckily had some scary movies on DVD that belonged to his brother James and Alex had a cd extension for his macbook. All was going well.

John let Alex pick one a design for the pumpkin, Alex picked one of John's from his sketchbook,
one he had been working on the most. A scary face but it was detailed beautifully. It reminded Alex of Mexican sugar skull candy. So John set to work, Alex did help out scoop out the insides, all the slimy seeds and playfully wiped them on John as he did. John's carving skills really were excellent, Alex set about watching him at point. He found it fascinating just how John worked his magic.

"You're so good with your hands" Alex let out. He hadn't even thought about what he had said.

John looked back at him over his shoulder, a teasing smile and he bit his lip. "Alexander" John purred pretendedly.

Alex caught on and he bats his eyes. Scoffing. "You know what I meant! Jesus." John giggled to himself and he turns back to get on with their pumpkin. Alex isn't too sure but he was certain he hears John whisper "All you gotta do is say." He didn't quite catch it but he doesn't question it either.

John was joking.

He had to be.

That was something Alex had certainly noticed. If it wasn't him imagining it. The way John would look at him, his eyes remaining on his that extra bit longer. John always watching him even if he was working. John taking up every chance he could to touch him. At the start Alex could ever get John to make eye contact or be in the same room as him. Now John couldn't keep away. Not that Alex minded, he didn't get to be with many people so Alex liked to assume John just preferred his company, his friendship.

After the pumpkin is carved, Alex bums a tea light inside of it and they stand back to take in its sight. John puts his pumpkin on the dresser in Alex's room and all the lights are out. They've got snacks, some soda, coffee for Alex. It's all good. Alex sticks on a movie for them on his laptop, they argue over between watching Nightmare on Elm Street and Childs Play.

They end up with Nightmare on Elm Street because John wanted to watch it, he pouted and whined so Alex gave in. Alex chose Childs Play because he found it less scary and didn't want Freddy Kruger in his dreams. But with John acting the brat, he had to do it his way.

John was brutal to watch movies with. Alex was looking away at one point and once he asked John when was it safe to luck, John tells him and it was exactly when the worst shit appeared. He howled with laughter at Alex shitting himself. Then budged up to him, taking Alex by the arm, not even caring about personal space and John grits his fingers into his arm. He leans up his head there next to Alex and whispers into his ear, "You scared?" and Alex tells him to jokingly 'get fucked'.

Alex doesn't miss the way John shoots him that same flirty look. He brushes it off and struggles through the rest of the movie. They watch a couple of other horrors, Alex was glad when the time changed to two in the morning so they could finally get some sleep. He shuts down his laptop, places it on the stand and yawns loudly. John made no move so Alex assumed he was staying here. It was fine, it wasn't the first time John fell asleep in his bed since his arrival.

Alex didn't think it'd be the last either.
With that Alex is getting up to shift away the near empty bowls of treats, John helps and they just cram them on the dresser cabinet. The pumpkin's light keeping the room lit next to their bowls and Alex tells John to leave it on before he went to try blowing it out. John teases Alex for being scared of the dark and tells him Freddy is going to get him. John really was something else.

After pushing John on the bed when he tried singing the creepy Nightmare on Elm Street 'one, two' song, Alex makes a quick dash for the bathroom, he's busting and with it being an ensuite, it's the best thing ever.

John comes strolling in seconds later, no warning for Alex - he goes to hog the bathroom mirror to wash up his face and let down his curls for bed. This is how it's become between them, not caring and just dilly dallying away around one another freely but comfortably.

Once they're tucked up in the bed, the pumpkin's warm orange glow glistens on them and they bid each other goodnight. Alex shifts on his side, the sheets carrying with him and John is there on his back on his side.

Alex tries to sleep but John is constantly moving, wriggling to get comfy.

As Alex begins to take off into his world of sleep, he feels something tap him the nape of his neck. He frowns into his sleep but ignores it and then there is another tap on the lobe of his ear, then his bun his tugged slightly.

That was when Alex grunts out "John"

John answers, "What?"

Alex gives him a kick underneath the covers. "Stopit"

"I'm not doing anything" John says but Alex can hear the laughter in his voice. Oh, god, John is trying to keep it in. He's doing his best to hold.

"You're poking and prodding me!" Alex grumbles as he's sitting up. John is lay down there beside him grinning and just as Alex turns to look down at him, he sees John's smile there in the dark against the soft light shining on him.

"Fucking dildo" Alex mutters at him.

John's mouth went wide and he's poking Alex in his stomach. "Well, damn, if you're offering." He joked. Alex laughed at him and swatted John on his shoulder before lying back down.

He tries his luck and prods Alex again before Alex fiercely got up, he's pushing up the covers all as John watches with this stupid grin. He laughs as Alex practically straddles him. John is reaching for Alex's waistband and snapping it against his skin.

Alex tugs at John's long hair causing him to mewl. John is clawing Alex up and down his sides as they're rolling around. Alex pulls John's ear harshly.

So John playfully bites Alex on the neck and coos "Give me your blad Alexandarrrrr!". Alex twists one of John's nipples, so just to be the real winner here, John shamelessly claps his hands on Alex's ass there on his boxer shorts and grits his fingers into his firm cheeks.
"Ooh, nice ass" John snickers and Alex calls him a perv.

At this though Alex had to pull away as he worries it may escalate. So he calls it a day when he crawls off him and John is lay there on his side there, evidently wanting more of a fumble, he's clearly enjoying this.

But Alex doesn't show any more acknowledgement and he gets back under the sheets. John huffs a little sigh as he does. Things had gone quiet again, being here in the south was always so quiet at night. The peace was good but Alex did sometimes miss the city noise.

"I'm surprised there hasn't been any trick or treaters" Alex quietly says. It's just something to break the air of what had just happened. Getting hot and bothered in the sheets with the boy he was looking after wasn't exactly in the job description.

John shuffles closer there behind him. Alex can practically hear his heartbeat in his ears - it's wild.

"Well we are far out" Johns tells him. Alex supposed that was true, no parent was going to travel this length to get some free candy, let alone allow their child to by themselves. "A lot of people used to say our house was haunted."

Alex went stiff. He looked over his shoulder at John. "Is it?"

"Yeah" John said sounding dead serious. Then he snorts in giggles. John kicks him under the sheets - yet again. John winces and kicks him back. "No, no it isn't. I was born and raised here. It looks creepy but it's just an old house. When I was in school, when I used to go, people made up rumours. Said my house was actually haunted though." John's voice lowered as he spoke. Alex's heart dropped. "It put a lot of people off coming when I invited them to birthday parties and stuff."

So it wasn't just rich boy John Laurens who never had friends at his birthdays parities. Alex knew that feeling. When you were passed around different homes, you rarely got a birthday card let alone a party. But Alex knew the feeling.

That rejection.

"Fuck them" Alex tells him. "They were probably jealous anyway. Broke ass kids."

John chuckled behind him. "Yeah - maybe so Alexander."

When it quietened down between them again. Alex was trying to sleep again and John once again had to talk. But what he says next only warmed up Alex's heart.

"Thanks for being a friend" He mumbles there into his pillow. Alex hears him clearly though. "This meant a lot to me tonight."

So Alex reached out an arm under the sheets and he's gone to find John's. He grabs John's arm and Alex can feel the distorted skin, the scars under his fingertips. They felt bumpy and ragged but also
like the most beautiful things in the world. They sparked magic under his skin that radiated from John. He brushed his thumb on a bunch of the many littered there on his arms and kept it swirling in a circle.

Within minutes they were both asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Yea so basically John is gay for Alex. Alex - well he knows there IS something but he's kinda unsure. It's a bit early yet for him to make a move. But John is just gonna keep being a little flirt who wants to bang his carer.

This is just the beginning btw. There is still lots of secrets. So it's all roses.

FOR NOW.

Thank you all so much for the lovely comments and kudos! I'm so shocked - this story was just an idea I had and I thought I'd give it a trial run, brain dump what I had into word and then upload it just to see if you guys liked it. Gosh!

<3 I appreciate you all so much!!!! x
It was the month after and Thanksgiving was coming up.

Alex didn't really celebrate Thanksgiving, well he did, since usually the Washington's demanded he come to theirs for dinner. Martha fattening him up with piles of turkey, mashed potato and pecan pie.

Washington sharing old tales from his days in service and when they first adopted Alex as a little boy.

It was always a nice day. But Alex didn't care about the holiday at all. The last couple of years Alex has Eliza with him to spend it with rather than it be just him and the Washington's.

Now, that had all changed.

John was busy creating some pretty lanterns for the dinner table. Small glass jars they had gotten from Target the other day, John had gathered some dry leaves and glued them inside. The tops tied with string in little bows. He said they would look nice while they ate on the day. Alex was impressed by his idea, they were quite cool. John cut out some turkey silhouettes out of colourful card and made them into 3D pieces of art.

He also somehow created little pumpkins from old book pages, dyed the pages in coffee water and attached an old step of their pumpkin to it. It was like a handmade pumpkin design. Alex always constantly amazed by John's little projects, he would tell him how talented he was and play around with them carefully.

Today John was painting little leaves in gold and silver on some plain white mugs. John had been glad that Alex finally got him out the house a month ago. He hadn't stopped stocking up on craft supplies, new paints and pens.

Alex had been happy just to get out the house, so he could grab some wifi and he was considering buying an internet package for the house, just so they had it at home. Since coming out, back and forth, it was a long way and a nuisance at that. Unlike New York where every cafe, shop, department store, all had wifi.

Alex was working on his next book, sat opposite of John at his craft table. Alex was in deep concentration mode, his head game strong and his fingers were on fire as he was working away. That was when John broke the silence and said, "Could I illustrate the cover for your next book?"

At this Alex stopped and he looked over his screen at John. He was finishing up one of the leaves and delicately tabbing a little stem on top. Alex thought he looked ever so sweet with his tongue out like that. Deep in concentration.

He adjusts his glasses and replies, "Uh, you could. I usually get people through agencies to find me someone though."

John stops painting and he darts his eyes to Alex. "But I'm right here? Less hassle." And he dips his brush into the pot of mucky water. "Cheaper too"
Alex watches the water turn into gold now. The silver vanishing. "True, John, but I would need someone with experience of -"

"For drawing?" John scoffed. "I've probably got more experience than half of your previous illustrators. I bet I'm better too." John wafts his arm around the art room, pointing towards all his work on display there.

Alex kicked himself mentally, he knew John was right. But John didn't know half of what went into making a book. It wasn't just pictures, it was editing, manuscripts, proofing, all the silly things that cost an arm and a leg.

Alex's agency usually only went for those with connections with other higher ups really. Not so much the talent side of things. It was always who you knew.

"John, it doesn't really work like that. It's kinda complicated, to be honest." Alex tells him.

So John smirks at him, he's gone back to painting and says, "Try me"

Alex does. "Everything is pretty much online nowadays, you would need an online portfolio, connections, so like Linkedin or some shit. Experience with a few agencies, I mean you could go freelance but everyone always demands some type of experience." Alex tells him. He isn't really lying, that was just how it worked in the world of creativity and especially in New York.

John shrugs. "Then we'll do that. You help me with the online side of things and I'll work under you." Alex had to laugh, John was cute. He looked up at Alex with an offended look. "What's funny?"

"Nothing" Alex chuckled and he's gone back to typing. John nudges him with such a thud under the table. "Nothing - John! That hurt!"

So John did it again and he's grinning this time. "You better tell me Alexander. What's so funny?"

"You! Just... you. You wanting to work with me. I just think it's kind of nice. Us pairing up." Alex finally admits. He's still smiling and John moved back his foot off Alex's shin.

"We're a team though. Me and you. We're talented, we're young and we're hella sexy." John purrs and laughs.

Alex snorts aloud. He gazes back up to John, he's got a cocky grin and raises his brow at John in surprise. "Wait, wait. You think I'm sexy Laurens?"

Although John goes back to painting his mugs, Alex can see the smile brazenly there on his face. "I'm just saying" He tells Alex and dips his brush. "That's all. Figure of speech."

Of course it wasn't. Alex knew John was backhandedly flirting with him. He was always doing it - infact, John had been doing it more often these days. He was always teasing Alex whenever he got the chance.

Tugging his hair, touching him if he could find a way to or a reason to, saying the most rudest things and adding how he was joking.

But Alex could see it in John's eyes that it was more than just that. Alex knew John liked him, he'd had a feeling since Halloween. John hadn't told him since he probably didn't want to make things awkward. Alex was here because he was getting paid and that was it.
Alex did find John attractive and he did find himself looking at John. But when he was constantly around him, each and everyday, it wasn't easy to John joins pretty hazel eyes baring into his own.

The way John would just strip off his top and stroll around Alex's room since he was never out of there, claim he was too warm and just stay like that for the rest of the night.

There was one night when Alex was sat on his bed, typing and John asked if he could take a quick shower in Alex's bathroom. Despite John having an entire bathroom of his very own.

He said he couldn't be bothered to treck all the way upstairs to his room - so Alex lets him.

John purposely leaving the door wide open, stripping off without a care in the world, Alex directly facing where the door was open and in the corner of his eye he could see John's bare ass right there. He saw John turn his head too, staring over at Alex, as if he wanted him to see. The worst part was when John turned back around, Alex looked up.

He went there.

He so went there.

Alex felt a tinge of shame seeing the plump but firmness of John's ass cheeks. They were supple and perfectly arched. The round brown little birthmark on one of them winned him over too. John's pretty toned back, slight freckled shoulder blades on show.

His lithe neck and his pretty thighs, slim calves. Alex chewed the inside of his lips as he watched, John knowing exactly what he was doing as well.

He'd done that deliberately.

Alex saw how John takes out his hair tie, allowing his curly long hair to fall past his shoulders. Alex watched it swaying, it was gorgeous, prettier than Eliza's dark long locks when he thought about it really.

God now he was comparing him to Eliza. Alex had stopped himself before he got up, did something stupid with John and instead he left out the room.
"I think we should work together on all your next projects" John says, knocking Alex out of his thoughts about John stripping.

Alex cleared his throat and hummed, it would be pretty cool to work on something with John. Alex was considering putting a word in for him.

Still a lot that was when Alex wondered about John's education. They had never really spoken much of it. "John"

"Yeah?"

Though Alex already knew he was homeschooled.

That was it. "I know you were homeschooled, but have you ever thought about maybe majoring art or illustration at college? You could easily fucking get in. You've got money, your mother works with some of the top people in the country. You could get in at any chosen university I bet." Alex tells him.

John sighs softly.

"John?" Alex darts his eyes to him. John looked fed up. "What's up?"

He waves Alex off and goes back to adding another silver leaf on the mug, he's turning it around and dabbing the brush. "I mean, I could. You're right. But I don't want to."

"Why?" Alex asked sound outraged, because by god if he was in John's shoes, Alex would be making the most of his opportunities.

"I mean, I used to. I wanted to go to art school when I was younger. Not anymore." John mumbles.

So Alex pushed again. "Yeah - but why John? You've got so many gateways to getting your name out there. Make use of it!" Alex stresses.

John frowns at him, clearly unimpressed of Alex pressurising him. "Alexander, listen. I don't want to. I'm not interested in going. I hated school, what makes you think I would fit in with people at a college?" He snapped. Alex looked like he had just been slapped. "It won't work for me."

After a couple of seconds, time passes and it went quiet again. Alex knew it was annoying for John but he didn't give up.

"College isn't like high school, it's different. You would be treated better. Look - I know, John, but you could take online classes. You could have a future. You don't have to sit in a class full of people, listen, this is what I was saying about agencies and shit. Take an online class, work with an agency from home. You could even move away from South Carolina, go live in a city, make new friends. -"

Alex just didn't get it. John slams the mug down and it silences Alex. John tilts his head at him and scowls. He means business.

"Stop" John spits out. "Do not decide what I will do. Do not order me around. You are not in charge of my future Alexander."

"John I'm trying to help -" Alex rebuffed.

"I said don't tell me what to do." John hissed back. "Don't"
Okay, so that was it then. Alex nods, he says nothing for once. He heaves a small sigh and goes back to writing. John is staring at him for a few minutes, his eyes drop and his fingers are gripping at the mug. Almost enough for it to shatter.

"My father - he used to try and tell me what to do. A lot." John murmurs bitterly. Alex stops typing and he just listens, eyes fixated on his work. "He wanted me to study politics. Be a big, fat, southern senator in a seat, just like him. I wanted to go to art school, but he would get mad. Called me names. Ignored me, shunned me after that."

Alex's fingers are brushing the keys, causing them to clatter as he listens on. John really did have it rough growing up.

"Like I'm not trying to come across as this pity party on legs -"

"John" Alex cut in. "You're not - you aren't. You had it bad, I get it. But he isn't here anymore, you can live the life you want." John twiddles with the brush between his fingers. He's considering Alex's words at least or looked like he was.

Then he pulled his stool further in and leaned on the table. His eyes still placed on his mug. Alex watches, waits for what he's going to say.

"You think I could go to college though?" John asked him shyly. Alex breathily chuckled, after all that commotion and now John was giving it some thought.

He nudges John under the desk. Lets him know he's with him. "Of course, for fuck sake. This is what I've just told you! John, you're talented, you can do anything."

John's lip play a small smile. "But just online classes, right? How would that work though?" He looks over to Alex.

"Well they usually just send you a document of what your objectives are, tell you the mark scheme, sometimes you have to do an essay -" John grinned at Alex. Alex rolled his eyes, he knew damn well what John was thinking. "One that you would have to write yourself Laurens."

"Alexander" John whined.

But Alex continued on, grinning along as he did. John's pouting face pulled his heart strings. Still, John would have to do it all himself. "Sure, I could help you but it'd have to be your own doing. You would probably just have to take photographs of your work or make a video then submit it online. That's usually how it works nowadays."

"Would you help me with the application though? I don't know what to even do." John tells Alex. "I'm no good with computers, I have one but I never use it."

"John, I already kind of knew that?"

He pulls a face at Alex. "I'm not that far back in the dark ages!" John cries. Alex laughs.

"Sure, sure. I'll help you, calm your ass."

John thanks him and he's grabbing back his mug. "I still need to think about it though."

"I know John."

"And just for the record, Alexander. I think you'd make a pretty good lawyer." John said.
Alex grins at him and he crosses his arms, leaning forward as he does. "You're mooching up to me, aren't you?"

John licks his lips. "Maybe a little?" And he laughs. "I'm being serious, you would. You're amazing."

Being told that by John made Alex's body heat up. His cheeks tingling and he never blushed. He never got this flustered and bothered. Being told he was 'amazing' by John though and John having confidence in him. That meant so much for some reason, he hadn't known John that long, but it felt like he had known him all his life. The weeks spent together.

All Alex ever thought about these days was John, just John.

Only John.

The last person to made him feel this way was -

"Thanks" Alex says softly. "Thank you"

John glances up to him there and he's keeping eye contact with Alex. As he does, John pushes back the hair handing in his face and around his neck.

He smiles that dimpled smile.

That was when Alex remembered.

Eliza had dimples too.

When Thanksgiving day arrived Alex sorted out dinner. He honestly had never cooked a turkey before so they ended up with chicken breasts and it would be pointless to get a whole turkey for simply just the two of them. But Alex didn't know - John could shift food well. He ate more than he did!

With the vegetables simmering nicely on the stove, the meaty gravy done, Alex was glad Martha had shown him how to cook growing up. They came in great for feeding Eliza and his baby at the
time. Now they were working wonders for John.

Alex got John helping him, rather than him sat watching like a pampered prince. Alex made John skin the carrots, shred them, wash them, then he got him to do the same with the potatoes and season the meat. John didn't complain either, he went along with it. They had fun as they did too. Laughing, chatting and throwing carrot skin at each other like overgrown children.

But there had been that moment between them when John needed help and Alex stood behind him, taking the knife with John's hand on top of it, together cutting the parsnips. Since John had no idea what to do with a parsnip, which made Alex laugh since he could carve the shit out of a pumpkin.

Really it was John wanting Alex behind him, giving him that contact, touching him, having him close by rather than just in his line of sight.

Alex took John as he was against him. He could smell John's silky curls, they were smelled like honey and mint. Cheekily Alex leaned in to give them a sniff, John didn't know and he did it again.

He smelled amazing. Alex daring goes to take another and as he does, John turns and he's pulling a face at Alex, before he cracks up laughing. "Stop sniffing my hair, weirdo" and winks at him when walking off.

Caught red handed.

Alex basks in his embarrassment and tries not to let it show.

As they eat dinner around the kitchen table, it's good and John says how proud he feels to have learnt something. He told Alex about his upbringing, maids cooking for him, his siblings and parents. They never ate together much, his father would get home late after they'd all eaten. His mother was always working in her office and that left John alone with his siblings.

He tells Alex how little Henry would go to his room with his plate, Mary never ate much, she was always moving food around and James couldn't eat enough, he would ram it in and flee the table.

So John was happy Alex could keep him amused through dinner and it had been one of the nicest thanksgiving meals yet in the Laurens household.

Usually thanksgiving was piles of strangers, wining and dining. John never liked it much growing up, he tells Alex he would hide at the top of the staircase away from people.

Then as he got older with his brothers and sisters, they had to stand around, smartly dressed and look pretty. John said it was hell and that he was happier being able to do, well, nothing on thanksgiving.

It was a holiday after all.

Instead of the traditional treats Alex and John stashed up on bags of chocolate, chips and dips. Then sat in bed, well, curled up in bed for the entire rest of the day watching movies on Alex's
Alex is sick of his whole pack of cheddar cheese Pringles and puts them aside for now on the stand. John had his own can of them and he's grabbing one out, closing the lid and he's chomping away on it, right down Alex's ear.

"Oh my god! Don't do that!" Alex whined.

Recently John found out that Alex hates the sound of chewing, with a passion and he enjoyed tormenting him ever since.

That was it with John. He liked to play games, tease and taunt Alex. Not that Alex minded, but it was something he'd picked up when being with John.

John laughed hysterically at his reaction, Alex almost fell off the bed. As John clutches his stomach he is shoved over the other side of the bed and he's coming back, laughing and crunching loudly.

"Shit, you're so easy to rile up." John chuckled.

Alex squinted his eyes at him, he's smiling and trying to look serious at the same time. John makes a small pounce on his arm, crunching away still and he's leaning up to Alex's ear.

Alex who can feel his heart beat like crazy, his face heating up and John right next to his ear. He can't even find the will to push him away either - not with him this close. He hears John swallow and in a seductive manner, John whispers, "Admit it, you love it when I'm all up on you like this."

"Shut it" Alex bites back.

John's snicker shoots tingles up Alex. Alex can feel the pulse in his hands thunder and they're clamming up with sweat.

"You love it really"

His hot breath tickling Alex down his ear and sending chills up his spine. So Alex shoved him again and John lands on his back, bouncing slightly as he did, laughing aloud.

"Stop being a scrotum" Alex hissed. He really didn't sound serious enough, still he pretends to be by frowning and crossing his arms. He places his attention back on the movie, although he was secretly waiting for what John would do next.

John teasingly wiggles his eyebrows at him, "Love a bit of that, yes, I do. You offerin' by any chance?" He giggles and puts his foot in Alex's face and Alex grabs it, bites the top of it. It's socked but still John squeals.

"Ha!" Alex shouts. "You wish!"

He's pouting at Alex and giving him the eyes. "You're so mean to me" John says, he's dipping his foot into Alex's shoulder. "Treatin' me real bad"

Alex had to laugh though. He gives John an 'oh really' type of look.

"You've not seen me mean" Alex informs me. "My friends say I'm like a pit bull when I start jabbering on and I always, always -" Alex shrugs off John's foot and it lands with a thump on the bed. "Win arguments." Alex knew he sounded smug but he did. He could be such a cocky bastard.
at times. Always bringing a gun to a knife fight.

This has John's interest and Alex can see it in his eyes. John moves on to his side, his arm perched up and resting his cheek in his hand. "Hm, I don't know about that Alexander. I think I can be worse."

Alex says, "Oh really?" He highly doubted that. John could be snappy sometimes but he was a puppy.

"Yeah" John said, dead on serious, a smirk at the ready. "And I could probably kick your ass too" At this Alex's mouth gaped open, he's babbling like a goldfish and John's conceited little face just rubbed him the wrong way. In that moment Alex's fuse is lit and flings himself on top of John there, the mattress bouncing and Alex wrestles John down. John snorts with laughter and he's going for Alex's hair. Tugging it, fiercely and twisting it. Alex is smushing John in the face.

"All talk and no action" Alex gritted out as he's wincing. God - John had a tight grip on him.

John yanks Alex head so that they're both looking into each other's eyes. "That would be you, Hamilton." John tells him gently. Then they're both silent and roar tucks of laughter.

"Watch my laptop!" Alex cries, when they're almost rolling on it. The movie still playing and going completely ignored.

So Alex climbs off John and John sits up too. He's eyeing Alex as he does. Alex notices John's hair is tangled in his hair tie, it's already half-way falling out and so he grabs his pony tail.

"What're you doing?" John asked, watching him fuss with it.

Alex starts to untangle the hair tie and he's threading his fingers through John's long unruly curls. "Your hair tie, it was tangled. Just sorting it out for you." Alex mutters in concentration. He's sat in front of John, working his fingers through the knot and John is staring as he does.

"It's so long" Alex murmured. He hadn't really meant for it to come out, he just said it and John had heard.

John lets out a soft 'mm' in agreement. Alex feeling John's eyes on him, working their magic and robbing his soul. Alex knows if he looks up now with his heated face, fingers jittering, he worries he might do something he would regret, especially with John this close to him.

Alex could feel the body heat radiate off him as well. Both of them were on fire. John tries to give Alex a hand and he's helping un-do the knot.

"I've been growing it since I was a kid really" John tells him. Alex gives a curt nod to show he's listening. Their fingers brush against each others. "My mother left it to grow out and my brothers. I mean, they've cut it short now. I always felt more like me with it longer I guess."

"Have you ever wanted to cut it?" Alex asked him, they're almost done with the knot now. Just a little bit more, Alex took so much care in not ripping out John's precious locks.

"Tons of times" John said with a sigh. "Almost did when the bullying got worse. Especially when people used to yank it when they sat at the back of me or try and put their gum in it" John mutters sadly. Alex's brow knits, he couldn't believe why anyone would do that. It made him angry.

"Kids - fucking assholes" Alex says under his breath.
"Yeah, so, instead of putting scissors to my hair, I put them to my skin instead." John bites his lip for a second and his eyes dim with bitterness. "People got to me, everyone in my class back then, my dad. Jesus christ, he used to make so many remarks. He almost cut it himself once..." Alex looks up at John and sees John is staring blankly into space, as if he were remembering a painful memory. He looked so void, lost.

Alex couldn't even bare to think what John's father did to him. If he tried to cut John's hair off - then what else had he done. He knew there had to be something else. The way John spoke so ill of him. It was more than that. For now, Alex left that topic alone.

"John" Alex calls him gently. John still looked gone in his string of memories. "Hey, John, you okay?"

Slowly, John says, "Yeah, I am. Just remembering something, that's all. It's nothing."

Finally the knot was unraveled and Alex slides his fingers through the ends of John's hair, to even the curls out. John then comes back and he's silent still.

He's glancing to Alex's loose bun and he's pulling it out.

Alex's hair tie drops out on the bed, as Alex has gone to pick it up, John swats his hand away and he's toying a hand through Alex's hair sweetly. John's long lithe fingers felt magical, Alex decided and he doesn't stop John from whatever he was doing.

"You ever think about cuttin' yours?" John asks.

It was random but Alex didn't mind. He heaves a little laugh. "Well, to be honest, yeah. I was thinking of getting it short again when I get back to New York. It used to be shorter but I grew it out. Just stopped caring about what I looked like."

In other words, Alex grew it out, his scruff out, stopped really paying much attention when he lost Eliza and their baby.

It still hurt, even now.

Alex always tried to keep up a smart appearance for her, always look his best for the Schuylers. A powerful family, always clean and tidy looking. Alex had to fit in for her, he would do anything for her. Attend the fancy dinner parties with her family's company, Eliza always telling him he was enough for her and that she didn't care about Alex having a lower income. He knew she meant well - Alex always felt inferior in a way. He always tried to be better. For her.

But now, Alex really couldn't give a fuck. He had let himself go.

Washington told him his long hair was a good look on him but Martha didn't like it.

That was what loss did to people, it changed them. Comments, image, remarks, opinions. They just didn't matter to Alex. He was thick skinned - unlike John who obviously wasn't.

Besides it was only hair. But Alex knew he needed to change up and get on with his life once this job with the Laurens was over.

A fresh start.

At this John's brow furrowed and he looked irritated. "John?" said Alex.
"New York - I forget. You're going back there, eventually." He says. John glances back to Alex, glaring at him. Alex feels like he had just been scalded.

Alex nods and he lets go of John's hair. "Yeah, well, that's where I live. It's home." He wasn't lying. John's mouth twists and he looked distant again.

"I mean we've got months yet before I go back. You can come see me up there anytime anyway. You would always be welcome."

John grumbles "I guess" and Alex feels bad for him. When he goes, John is basically back to being on his own with his horrible mother. Plus if Alex was truthful, he didn't want to leave John.

John filled this hole inside of him that had long been dug up. Since Eliza left him, John was there, John brought that warmth back to his cold lifeless body. Going back to his dingy apartment, the same grey skyline of the concrete jungle away from the sunny rich skies of south carolina. Knowing John would be here by himself and after everything.

Getting to know him, inside and out.

Alex wasn't sure he really wanted to part from John.

Not yet.

Alex is meeting John back in his eyes, his big brown ones marrying light hazel. He didn't realise he was doing this but Alex was shimming closer there on his knees, his mind was all fogged up and it was a complete blur. John sat opposite him, staring dreamily and he is inching forward as well.

John was twiddling his bottom lip between in his teeth and the corners of his lips hitch upwards. In a swift moment Alex leans in, he can't help himself. He cannot say no to John.

This gorgeous young man he had known for only two months, talented, pretty, mischievous, even a little mysterious. Alex wants it all, he wants more. So he's moving forward, gently and slowly presses his lips against John's in a quick clash.

His lips are silky, a little roughness to them but still sweet and soft. John isn't really given a chance to kiss back because Alex is reopening his eyes, seeing John up close and he's letting out a gasp. He can't believe he had just done that.

He fucking kissed John.

Alex makes a stressed squeal and covers his mouth, he's immediately scrambling backwards and accidentally kicks John in the shoulder. John lets out a pained gasp and his expression is a picture of hurt.

"Shit!" Alex gasped. "I'm so, so, sorry John. I shouldn't have - fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck." Alex can't look at him, he can't even face John. Not now.

John is watching Alex freak out and he's moving towards Alex. Alex is pushing him away, John
falls to his side and he's scowling angrily at Alex. "I'm sorry" He says again and Alex is shoving away his laptop to the end of the bed.

"Alex"

He's about to get up off the bed since he needs to be alone. Think about what had just happened and think of how this looked. Kissing the Laurens boy - the one he is caring for. His mother, she would kill him if she knew.

"Alex wait"

He almost got away too. But Alex was stopped when a firm grip on his arm has him landing back on the bed. John was stronger than he looked and he's grabbed Alex by the shoulders, twisting him around so he could face him. Then Alex was once again met with John's lips on his own.

So John wanted this just as much as he did then.

He's kissing back this time and Alex couldn't resist. He's doing the same, moving his lips in a steady fashion with John's. Alex puts a hand on John's thigh there in front of him and John wastes no time, uncurling his hands from Alex's shoulders and gradually he snaked them around Alex's neck.

Alex gritted his nails in John's thigh as they kissed and John moans into his mouth, it's a playful and cute moan.

He can feel John smiling into the kiss. As they break away, both of them with bruised lips, Alex can't look him in the face still, he's never this brimmed with embarrassment.

Even when fucking Eliza, hard and heated into the mattress of his bed at his apartment. Never. Yet John made him feel so exposed. Like a mask had been lifted.

John is the first to say something, he's breathless, chuckles as he says, "Wow" and adds "Alexander"

He then leans back in for another kiss and this time it was more sensual. Both of them close their eyes, their lips working together and John is the one to dip in his tongue cheekily. Alex is given a mouthful of tongue, its exploring his mouth and Alex can taste John. So he does the same. Lips locked and they're going at it. John makes sure to fall backwards, dragging Alex down with him.

Alex finally has the chance to roam his hands freely in John's hair as he does. After all these weeks, pining for him, wanting him and now he got to touch him. Electricity flowed in his blood with every stroke, tongue brushed and moan. It felt heavenly. John moves his hands to Alex's cheeks, his thumbs worming around his stubble there. It's briskly and soft all at the same time, John happily sighs into the kiss.

They break away again and a long string of salvia is swaying between them. It pops, both of them
have it dribbled down them, for Alex it's on his chin and John on his cheek.

John squeaks with laughter and Alex makes an 'argh' sound before rubbing it away. He wipes John's cheek when he's finished his chin. Then they're gazing at one another, they know things have changed for good now.

No going back.

Alex took in John's eyes and it was amazing to see them this up close. John looked whole.

"I like you, a lot." John whispers. Alex's heart skips a beat and his throat goes dry. John's cheeks are tinted with a tinge of pink, his little freckles stand out and it's the cutest thing. "Since we met... I didn't know if it was okay or not."

At this Alex takes in the sight of John, his face filled with adoration and Alex leans in to give him one last tender kiss on the lips. Then pulls away and he rolls off John, goes to lie at the side of him. John turns to meet Alex and he's gone back to soothing his cheek, thumbing at his scruff.

"John" Alex closes his eyes. "It's fine. I like you too."

"How much?" John smirks as he moves closer to Alex, their lips brushing against each others. Alex can feel John's breath tickle the tip of his nose.

"How much what?" Alex says and he's smiling now as well.

At that John pecks him on the lips and he bites Alex's bottom lip. For someone who didn't get out much, Alex could've sworn John had some experience with men. He had to have. He was a great kisser.

"Alex" John moans lightly and he presses his forehead on Alex's. "Quit goofin' around."

Alex surpasses another laugh. Sometimes John's southern accent got him. It really did.

"A lot Laurens, I like you, a lot. Happy now? I like you, a damn lot. I've been thinking about touching you, playing with your fucking curly hair -" Alex opens his eyes again, John's grin on display, clearly enjoying having his ego boosted and Alex is twirling a lock of hair around his finger. John's curl perfectly wrapped around him like a helter-shelter. "Which I love. It's gorgeous as fuck."

"Jesus, Alex" John says, his tone amused and his eyes wider.

"Fuck what other people have said about it, fuck those brats from your school who tried to ruin it, screw what your dad thought about it. John, you better never cut it off. It's amazing." Alex gives the strand a little tug and John twitches. Now that Alex was wittering on, he really couldn't stop himself. He didn't want to stop either.

"Your freckles, they're like a sea of stars. Constellations even."

Now John was laughing. He gives Alex another kiss and cuts him off for a moment. Pulls back, lovingly staring him in the eyes still and whispers, "Alexander, you and that writers talk." Then kisses him once more. "As cheesy as it is, your sentences, they're really going to leave me defenceless. My god."

Helpless even. John looked helpless right now.
So pretty, his cheeks glowing a lovely hue of peachy pink against his tan skin. That was when Alex noticed his dimples. "Yeah, it is. But like, I'm trying to woo you over -"

John immediately cut in. "You had me on the very first day, you idiot." John scoffed. "Couldn't keep my eyes off you..."

Alex remembered. John's had stared, stared and gawked all too much on the first day of his stay.

Then Alex brought him in for another kiss and it was on John's neck. As he was kissing at it, John's neck so lean but firm. Alex peppered kissing along it and on his adams apple. It bobbed as he did. John mewled when Alex got to a particular spot and he figured that was where John would break.

"Even your dimples" Alex whispered into his ear huskily. "Love them"

John put his hands back in Alex's shaggy hair and he's massaging his scalp as Alex kisses away. John leans his head back, taking in each and every peck. His eyes flutter and roll back as it happened. "Not the only place I have dimples" He tells Alex giggling.

"Back dimples? Am I correct?" Alex said between kisses.

With a quick swat on Alex's shoulder, John darkly laughs and goes, "So you were looking at me that day?" He was referring to the day when John was stripping, literally right before Alex's eyes there in the bathroom as he worked on his book.

"I knew it"

"And what if I was?" says Alex in a taunting voice.

"Well you liked what you saw, didn't you." John replied, he's crunching his lips together as he smiles awkwardly. "Didn't you" He said after a small pause.

Alex figured it must've been a risky move for John to make. But he remembered the way he did it, John confidently stripped without a care in the world. It was funny to find him suddenly so shy now.

Alex heaves softly through his nose. His smile lopsided. "You're perfect"

John's smile fades and so do his dimples. He drops his gaze and Alex's smile faltered too. "John?"

"That's taking it too far. I wouldn't say I was 'perfect' Alexander" John says a little too sadly. He was too harsh on himself at times. "Far from it"

John takes a hand out of Alex's hair and he drops it between them both. Alex can see the scars from under John's sleeve. So Alex does one better, he has to do this just to let John know he is good enough. That he is beautiful.

"You're perfectly imperfect" Alex tells him. John arches up a brow and Alex places a hand over his wrist, he's taking it and turning John's hand over, John complies as he does. Then Alex slides his fingers over the many, many jagged scars. They were so rough looking, painful looking. It did make Alex wonder how John could've done this to himself. How he had the will and tolerance for it.

John watches his fingers swirl around his scars, there was one here, a ladder of them right down his arm, some were going down as if John had been trying to end it all. Some of the gashes were
thicker, fatter looking and the scars were healed outwards, bumpy looking. Alex curved his finger around one of those ones. John continued to trace his every move.

"I got stitches for that one" He mentions, which the very fat thick one Alex was touching. "Almost bled out too"

Alex's eyes darted to John's and they were like saucers. "Holy shit"

"I think I was sixteen, maybe seventeen. I can't remember." There were so many, John had lost count. Alex's heart went out to him. "It just helped y'know, at the time. It was addictive. Then when I was homeschooled, my parents had me on watch. Few days give or take." He shrugs.

It must've been so difficult for him. Alex squeezes his arm and his eyes drop back to it. The scars staring him back in the face.

"You probably think - actually, it doesn't matter. They're just scars." John babbled and he chuckles. As if it didn't matter. But to Alex it did matter.

As John went to move his arm, Alex kept it in place. "They're not just scars though, John, they're demons. Your fears, your loneliest nights, all the bad shit, your parent's bad parenting, the bullying." Alex spits out quickly. John's face went blank. "I think nothing bad about you. Don't hide, you don't have to hide away."

John looked stunned. Shocked. He looked as if he had never heard those words before. His eyes were glassy, he kept on blinking like he was fobbing away tears. He's breathlessly panting. Probably taking it all in, Alex thinks.

Alex grips his arm again. "I like them and you, okay? I just think you need to hear that. If not off me, someone. But I wanna be that someone." Then Alex takes John's arm and he's bending his head, pressing a kiss down on the many scars.

John lets out a small whimper as he does, John even tries to pull away at one point but Alex held him down. Tells John to let him and so John does. Then Alex moves upwards, leaving kisses on each and every flock of scars, planting his seeds of love. John is wide-eyed, watching him as he does and his throat is bobbing.

"Alexander" He murmured.

After Alex was finished, he looked up to John.

He was so happy, he could probably die.

A smile reappeared on John's face and he slips his arm off from Alex's hold, then immediately throws himself on him. Pulling Alex in and wrapping his arms around him. John is nuzzling his face in the crook of Alex's neck, he was whispering a series of thanks and kissing Alex there on his neck. But mostly just holding him in place.

Alex held John back, taking him by the waist and they kept like that for some time.
They ended up dozing off together and it was Alex who woke up first. Through blurred vision Alex is looking around, then he remembered.

That - that had actually happened.

Him and John.

Alex's stomach flipped and twisted in knots when he saw John snuggled in his chest, arms still curved around him.

Alex's nerves calm down after a second or two when he's taken in the sight. John peacefully snoozing, his tousled hair sprawled there on the sheets and his light snores filling the room.

Alex softly brushes back some of the lone hair strands out his face, he remained carefully palming the side of John's head from his ear to the ends of his hair.

He wonders what time it is and Alex cranes his head, he looks over to his laptop, the power off - it's already dead. So Alex is vigilant when he sits up, he tries not to wake John as he's shifting and un-looped John's arms from around him.

As he does Alex shimmies off the edge of the bed and he's getting up. When he's back on his feet, Alex stretches and yawns. He goes to grab his phone off the vanity and sees it's three in the morning. They must've fell asleep too early and Alex decides to go grab himself a quick glass of water since his throat is dry as sand.

When he comes back to his room, closing the door soundly, Alex finds John stirring and he's rubbing his eyes. John sits up in the crumpled sheets, he's looking around for him and when he spots Alex shutting the door, John can't help himself from beaming, even if he was sleepy still.

"Hey you" Alex calls softly to him.

He walks back over and takes a long swig of his drink before placing it on the night stand. Before anything, he had to shift his laptop off the bed too. He puts it on the floor out of the way. John lies back down, he's watching what he's doing and then makes grabby hands for Alex. "Come back to bed"

"Hurry" John whined. Alex pulls his tongue at him and John pulls his back then grinned.

"I am, I am. Hold on." Alex wants to get comfortable for the night, he's still in his shirt. John watches him all bright-eyed as Alex unbuttons his shirt.

Alex notices John as he does, his lips cock at John's interest. "Now who's the peeping tom" Alex chuckled. John's grin goes wider and he's kicking his foot in Alex's thigh as he's stood there.

"Stop making me wait" John mutters, his voice still hoarse with sleep. "I want to see you"

Now Alex wasn't really body conscious but he was no where near as lean and toned as John. Alex's small tummy roll with it's bit of hair always made him feel bad when he looked in the mirror.
Before when Eliza was in his life he didn't have one. Alex kept a better diet back then, worked on himself when he could. After the break up, Alex found himself surrounded by boxes of Panda Express and McDonalds almost every friday night.

With that, Alex slipping off his shirt anyway because - whatever. If John didn't like him, then, oh well. Alex's pink nipples came into view, his touch of chest hair and stomach. John takes him all in and he's eyeing every inch of him by the way his eyes shifted. Feeling that rise of self conscious bubble again, Alex sits down on the bed with his back turned to John and he's undoing his belt.

Alex can feel the bed shift behind him and already John was right behind him there on his knees. Alex drops his belt to the door and he's scuffling out of his jeans, leaving himself in his black boxers. Then as Alex is kicking them off his feet and over by the wall, he feels John's arms wrap around his waist and his chest is right on Alex's back. Alex feels John lips ghosting over his neck and he's leaving a kiss.

"Alexander" He says into Alex's ear. It sends chills down him.

John hands are snaking around his stomach, another kiss is placed on his neck and Alex can feel John cup his roll. He freezes from the touch on it and John does it again. It seemed he enjoyed the feel of it. "Knew you would be amazing in the flesh" He says against him.

Alex smiled and he's taken aback when he can feel John's hand's play with the elastic of his shorts. John kissing his neck, nipping at it and Alex closes his eyes. He decides to just go with it. He can feel John's hand dip even lower, it's palming over his groin and then sweeping right into the center, right on his bulge.

"Let me feel you" John hazily says, his nose rubbing against Alex's neck and he kisses it again. This time he sucks on him and Alex bends his neck to the side as he does, allowing John more room.

John's palming his cock through his boxers, playing with it and squeezing it, not too tightly though.

"Fuck John" Alex lets out. John sucks at him in a part that makes Alex's eyes water nearly. He continues to play with Alex, tease him, he keeps it going and Alex is moaning his name softly.

Alex was lost in this tranquil of bliss. That was before he could feel John's fingers sneaking into his shorts though and Alex pulls away. "Huh?"

John is left surprised and Alex turns to properly kiss the look of worry off his face. As he breaks away, Alex says, "Not tonight" against John's lips and he has John practically pouting.

"Why not?" John asks and he's cheekily palming on Alex again. Alex can feel himself getting hard but tonight wasn't the night.

With one last peck, Alex shifts so he can pull back the bed sheets. "John, it's nearly four in the morning -"

"So?" John looked hot and ready to go. His curls were a wild mess, he was wide awake now and his eyes said it all.

God he wanted Alex.

Alex was slipping under the sheets and shaking his head before patting the spot next to him. "Not tonight, well, this morning." Because it was dawn technically. But with the dark winter morning sky on show, it looked like night still. "When we're both a little bit more awake, then we can fool
around." John crawls on his lap there, straddling him and he pretends to frown. Alex presses a finger against his nose. "Bed. Now."

John says nothing apart from slip off his sweater from over his head, Alex had an entire view full of John's lean body and his firm little stomach. He's crumpling up his sweater and firing it god knows where in the room. Alex traces a finger over one of the scars above his nipple when he does. John looks down to see which he's looking at and smiles. "That one, it hurt like a bitch."

The skin was more sensitive there after all.

"John, they all look like they fucking hurt." Alex commented.

John pulled a face then shrugged and he's moving in on Alex, pressing more kisses on his lips and Alex follows his league. Arms wrapping around each other, hands in each others hair and John has his joggers off in a hurry. Alex can already see his crotch is hard as nails and it is difficult, so difficult not to pay attention to it.

Alex lifts up the sheets and John is slipping in then back on top of him. John is already rutting himself against Alex there, his arms reach to go around Alex's neck and Alex has to shift up as he does. Their bump of groins bash against one another as he does and cause each other to just instantly harden.

With John's arms around Alex's neck there, he's gone back to kissing him but more sensually this time.

Alex thinks to hell with it, he's lowering his hands and placing them on John's lower back, he can feel those back dimples and he dips his fingers into them as he does. They're like little craters and John stifles a giggle into Alex's mouth when he does this.

"If you want something to play with, my cocks waiting." John chuckles. Alex swiftly gives him a slight pat on his ass and John quavered from it.

Finally after weeks pent up from wanting John, to do this, have him up here this closely. Alex hums in delight.

"It'll have to wait"

"Alexander" John whined childishly.

"We'll get to that, at some point." Alex tells him. He's ruffling John's curls and John rests his head on his shoulder. "John, I think we've reached our peak for tonight."

It still felt too soon to go further. Alex wanted to, he really did and that was with the lack of energy hanging over him. Alex would love to fuck John senseless in this bed until he screamed out his name, crying tears and using his mop of hair as reins while they rattling the walls of the entire house.

But he didn't want to rush things, ruin them in one heated moment. With that Alex wanted it to be special when they finally did make love. He wanted to love John, show him love and give him that, he needed love. Just, not right now.

"No we haven't -" John pushes his pelvis against Alex's and Alex grunts.

Alex then manoeuvres himself because this has to stop. John was fucking relentless. Alex turns on his side, in which John squeaks as flops on his and their legs are tangled. "Alexander!"
"You're deliberately trying to fuck me up, aren't you?"

John bites his lip as he's looking him in the eyes. "Maybe, but, I guess that I'm just happy I can be with you now."

It was the same for Alex. He was glad too. His heart warmed and the ice had melted off it. "You have me" Alex sighs. He moves "Hear that? You have me."

Silence takes place and Alex stretches out an arm to switch off the lamp on his stand, then settles back down. John snuggled into Alex and they're all toasty together there in bed. Alex can feel John's feet on his own, it turned into a playful footsie war and a few more kisses between their giggling.

Both so besotted with one another. When they stop that was when they decided to properly settle - well Alex did.

John still had his eyes open, staring at Alex there in the dark. The moonlight from winter's morning sky shone through the little crack in the drapes, giving John plenty of Alex's handsome face to take in.

"I didn't think you liked guys" John quietly said. Alex can feel John's finger brush one of his nipples. It's twirling around, not teasingly but more subconsciously. As if he didn't have anything else to toy with while he spoke. "I mean, I kind of maybe had an incline, but I wasn't very sure."

John thought wrong.

"I do"

At this John made a small gasp and he pinched Alex's nipple, it had Alex wincing. "You never told me that! Kept that quiet, didn't you."

"Why would it have mattered?!" Alex rebuffed.

Alex never really made much of a deal about his sexuality. He had never cared about sexuality, if he liked them, he liked them. Alex had known he batted for the other team just as much as he was reliable with the ladies. Alex always thought if he got on well with said person, regardless of their gender then that was all well.

"Because it just does!" John cries. He nuts his face into Alex's shoulder. "After all this time and here I was, freaking out, whether or not I should make a move on you for real." Alex snickers at him.

John nips his neck. "It's not funny" he says with Alex's skin in his mouth. Alex bats him off.

"It seriously doesn't matter. I'm bisexual, big deal." Alex chuckled. "John, it's fine. Calm down."

So John leans back and he's sighing, knowing Alex is right. "It's just... forget it. So how many other guys have there been?"

Alex's eyes sprang back open. John was seriously doing this. "John it's too early for this shit"

"Yeah, but, I kinda wanna know. I'm curious." There had been a few guys from Alex's college days he slept with. Nothing special, nothing important, just one night stands from his local campus bar. Guys who were after a good time and some Alex had woken up with from house parties.
"A couple, back in college I was a little wild and got with some guys from parties, some bars, it doesn't matter." Alex tells him.

There was a slight pause before John replied. "It does"

He doesn't really see the problem, it was college. "John, you're the only guy I want to be with, right here, right now. The only one." Alex takes John's hand and he's giving a brush with his thumb. "All of that - that was years ago, I don't even remember their names!"

Then there was yet another pause and John creeps closer. "I know" He giggled. "I'm messing around, I know it doesn't matter really."

Alex hushes him and tells John to go to sleep. As he settles again, John pipes up once more and it has Alex wanting to scream.

"You haven't got a boyfriend back in New York, right?" This time John didn't sound as if he were joking. If Alex was certain there was a hint of worry in his tone.

They were really doing this, at this hour. Alex drew a hand across his head and he's shaking his head. "John, no. No I haven't. There is no one in New York, I'm single. Please, give it a rest."

What they had was so very new, fragile still and Alex really didn't want 'fifty questions' hanging over him when he was at the brink of collapsing. Alex was happy to answer anything about his past relations with John - except the miscarriage. Well, maybe he would tell John, depending on how far they take this. They still weren't really anything at this point.

They had a crush on each other and finally went with it, it still didn't mean all that much. But Alex was willing to try with John and hope that John would give him a chance.

John gives him one last kiss and he's possessively got Alex by the cheeks, gently bringing him closer and they're breaking away. John's thumb still in a motion of small circles on Alex's scruff.

"It's just that I've been lied to before." John tells him.

Alex smiles. "John, I give you my word. There is no one else, just you. I'm not like that."

"Okay" John sounds sad when he spoke and he moves his hand away. "I trust you"

They're sharing the same pillow, though there is the other going unused but they wanted to be that bit closer.

"Just you" Alex sleepily says and within minutes he's asleep, softly snoring against John.

Even half an hour later John was still awake. His hand caressing Alex's lower back as he slept and he's watching the moon in the turquoise sky through the peak of the drapes.

Still bright, still lit.

Alex didn't even flinch when he felt John's fingernails dig in.
I literally had to google Thanksgiving craft ideas for this and "What do Americans do on Thanksgiving?" since I'm British and it isn't a thing here, I know it's basically a big roast dinner and you get drunk. That's British Christmas in a nutshell.

The kinda short I'm thinking for Alex's hair is Lin's current hairstyle. I also had to google Anthony Ramo's body since I wasn't sure if he was really skinny or bulky. Damn. Glad I did ;)

But yeah! Alex and John have finally hit it off. Sorry if it feels too soon but I'd like to get the ball rolling pretty earlier with these two. You'll see why. For now, just enjoy the sweetness between them both ;) 

Thank you so, so much for all the amazing comments and kudos! Your support keeps me and my carpal tunnel going! :D I appreciate each and every one of them! <3 x

PS.

Can I just take a moment to gloat and tell you guys that Jasmine (Peggy/María) liked one of my Instagram comments the other day? I SCREAMED - She knows my name :')
Another couple of weeks passed in a swift blur and Alex still couldn't quite get his head around the fact that John was now, technically, his boyfriend.

Well they had never really put a title on it but Alex assumed they were, said, boyfriends. They were still in the early stages of things, small soft kisses in the morning, cuddles when they curled up to watch a dvd on Alex's macbook. Sneaking little glances at one another when they were getting dressed or undressed for bed. Sharing baths.

John usually held on to his arm if they went on a walk around the grounds or into the woodland near the house. But other than that they cooked together still, laughed together and chat. It wasn't much different except now they kissed and touched more than they did before.

Alex never really pushed it too much. He never did anyway with his relationships, he tend to take his time learning his new partners. Eliza had been the same and John was getting the exact same treatment.

John didn't seem to really mind taking it slow either, the way he would look at Alex told him their relationship was more than sex. His hazel eyes glimmering with adoration and pure happiness, that brought Alex happiness. He hated to imagine a time before where John was in a dark place and promised himself he would make John's life better.

For now it was all good. Things felt as if they were improving.

Now that it was already December, that meant Christmas was on the horizon.

For the first time Alex got to witness the bright lights in Charleston, all shops filled with decorations and presents prepackaged, television bombarded you with Christmas themed ads. Santa's grottos popping up in almost every mall and the shops busier than usual. Unlike New York where it was absolutely mental, chaotic and everywhere was Christmas with the huge trees, decorations from building to building.

South Carolina was more chilled and Alex was quite glad that it would give him room to breathe this Christmas.

He liked Christmas - probably more than any other holiday but Alex always felt a particular loneliness on the day. An empty space which couldn't be filled. He usually would think about his mother, even when he was with Eliza, he thought about his mother on Christmas day.

Christmas had always been special to him because back when she was alive and Alex's mother always made it as amazing as she most possibly could. When Alex's father walked when he was a baby, leaving her and him alone, it had been rough. Alex could remember being not even seven years old yet, his mother not really being able to afford much throughout the year, she struggled from pay check to pay check. But when Christmas came that was when she spoilt the two of them.

A full bag of food shopping, an actual full bag, also Alex would get a cheap plastic toy from their local dollar store or thrift store and they even had the heating on in their cold mouldy apartment. Full blast, all day long. Now to some that would be an average day in the week but for Alex as a
kid, that was his Christmas day sadly. But it always held precious memories.

His mother tickling his sides until he rolled on the floor screaming with dribble and tears of laughter, them telling each other stories, both of them watching movies on their beat up TV and Alex always jumping up every two minutes to give the television a good whack on the back of it for a clearer picture.

Also his mother telling him about Santa and his reindeers, how Santa had told her that Alex had been a good little boy all year around - except from when Alex pushed a kid in his class down the stairs for bullying a black student. It was the mid-nineties for christ sake. But Santa apparently understood and let him off the hook that particular year for standing up for what was right.

Christmas was a dear one indeed.

As of late John and him had gone into Charleston for a stroll before they went caught cabin fever. John not so much wanted to go, however, Alex forced him out, by the waist which resulting into a heavy make out session on the front door. Alex grabbed his hand and pulled him outside.

There in Charleston the high palm trees were coated with decorations, it was fairly amusing to Alex. He wasn't used to seeing palm trees in general let alone ones with reindeers or santa hanging off them. It was such a bizarre clash. Sort of like pouring hot cocoa into a bowl of kool aid and stirring it together.

Also there was the weather, it was still warm but Charleston was cold in a different kind of way. It was chilly, that bit nippy out bit not below freezing - not just yet. John told Alex that they did get a little snow but it was probably no where as hectic as New York. The atmosphere just wasn't the same but it was nice.

Back at the house, in John's room, Alex was putting pen to paper and jotting down the next part of his story. He always had to do this, brainstorm new ideas and think about plot twists to include. But currently he was stuck on something with his main character and wasn't sure what direction to turn in.

"Stuck yet again" Alex mutters to only himself. He taps the pen on his temple before giving it another go on paper. Nope - nothing. He sighs.

John was currently in the bath and he was full of a horrid cold. Alex had been living up to every expectation of this job, such as cook and feed John, give John hot tea, be a good boyfriend by putting up with the horrific hacking noises from his bugged up throat and the gross stack full of crumpled tissues on the bed side.

One or two Alex found on top of his laptop that John must've subconsciously stuck there in the middle of the night. Then there was Cuddling John and tousling his hair when he couldn't stop coughing at two in the morning, despite how much it kept Alex awake.

Yes, Alex liked to think he was doing an amazing job.

As Alex was scribbling down more notes there in his journal, he could hear John's light foot steps pad against the carpet and the flick of the bathroom light switch go off. John was still sniffling and coughing. Alex continued on with his writing, he had a really amazing just idea and didn't want it to slip out of his mind.

Just as he was getting half of it down, Alex's attention is pulled away and he's looking over to the side of the bed. John stood there in the middle of the room rubbing himself down with he towel.
Alex had gotten used to seeing John's cock and ass as of late, neither of them were shy about their bodies anymore and Alex wasn't insecure about his small belly roll anymore.

But he always liked to think back to the first time, where they had been getting heated in bed, all hot and steamy then John just whipped his cock out. Resulting in good ol’ hand jobs for the pair of them. Exploring it for the first time had been nice, having John manhandle and fondle him had been amazing too. That was always the fun part in new relationships, getting to know your partners body and John had a lovely body, even his scars were beautiful by this point and didn't bother Alex in the slightest. He looked past them - saw John.

He did have a nice cock though. Mm, yes, not too big or thin, girth was just right, a nice hue of milky brown and a pink head. Cute. With Alex's attention span solely planted on it there wiggling around, him pervertedly watching, he didn't realise John had already noticed him gawking.

John may be sick but he still had some spark left in him.

He's smirking at Alex and he's walking over, ruffling with the towel on his hair as he does. His gorgeous long curly hair all damp from his bath, loose in perfect ringlets and Alex could smell him from where he was sat, John smelled like coconut.

Jesus christ.

Then John drops the towel on the floor and he's hopping on the bed there on his knees. He's still wet and Alex jilts when John is crawling over to him. Alex rolls his eyes, he can't help but laugh though.

Due to John being sick he had become hornier than usual, also his voice is hoarser, deeper and it got Alex off. He was always asking Alex for a hand job or if he could suck Alex off yet.

It was already the third day in a row of this cold and it was driving Alex mad, sexually and tending to John's every need was sending him nutty. He wasn't even the one ill either.

"You're all wet still" Alex scolds as he eyes his boyfriend.

With that John mooches up to him, he's giving no fucks and straddling Alex's waist. His firm thighs, groin and bare ass cheeks brushing against Alex's joggers.

John leans forward and moves in for a kiss. Alex of course, he can't stop himself from kissing John, kissing him was like needing air.

He's moving some of the hair out of John's face as he can feel John's tongue slip in his mouth. Slipping a strand of it behind John's ear. Alex kisses back and then he's on his back there. John lowering down and Alex's hands twirling a lock of hair around his fingers. Playing with it gently. John always liked it when Alex toyed around with it, twisting it like spaghetti on a fork.

"I was waiting for you to come in, you said you'd bathe me again tonight" He said in a sulky voice. Because yes, Alex had also started to give in to John and bathe him or get in the bath with him. Depending if he was in the mood for baths. John always preferred them. Alex looked into his eyes and added a kiss on the end of John's little nose.

"Working, baby. Always working." Alex tells him.
John had started to love the pet names, since they had gotten together, Alex used pet names on him. It made John feel so wanted, special even. So far there was 'baby', 'gorgeous' or just plain, simple 'dickhead' if Alex was feeling ratty. It was all in good taste though.

"Next time you do that, I'll sneeze all over you" John says with a pout and then he smiles. Kissing Alex on the lips again.

"Mm, wouldn't be the first. You've been at it all week and I'm surprise I haven't caught your fucking cold yet." Alex sighs, he's still raking John's curls with his fingers. He loved the way they looked against the lamp's dim glow, his curls looked burgundy in this light.

John bites his bottom lip, he's thinking on something and then he says, "Well, when you get sick, I'll look after you."

Alex snorts. "You keep me on my toes enough as it is, I have no time to get sick." He says and boops John on the nose with his finger. "How're you feeling now? Still shitty?"

John grinds himself on Alex a little and Alex releases a small groan in his throat. "Bummed up, kinda achey, a bit weak and yeah Alexander. I feel like absolute shit." John buries his face in Alex's neck. "Heal me"

At this Alex just laughed, throatily at John's little whine. He sounded so helpless, so cute. Alex rubs John's back and John frowns at he laughs. Clearly not helping nor really showing much sympathy towards him. "You're a dick" John mutters.

"As if I can even clear your cold. Please, extrapolate. How should I help?" Alex grinned with a daring gleam in his eyes. He was in one of those moods.

John's ones sparkled and he was on Alex like a rabid dog. Tongues twisting, nipping one another's lips and John roughly rutting against Alex. Alex was hardening himself through his sweats and he was tempted. "Watch my journal, I don't want it wet. I've got some valuable material going on."

"Oh screw work - kiss me" John pulls backed back in for yet another lingering kiss.

It left Alex swaying.

Alex was so tempted to flip John over and just take him right here, right now. But Alex kept it together and instead he's grabbing John's cock.

At this John growls against his lips and lets out a breathy moan when Alex begins to jilt him. His fingers tightening on John's sweet length and Alex starts to beat the meat good. His technique amazed John while John had his own thing he liked to do on Alex. Alex knew just how he liked it, the way and motion of how John's cock gained excitement. He starts pumping it and then slowing then before always surprising John by speeding up again.

Alex doesn't forget to give John's sack a quick play with too, the apples never went ignored since their stem was toyed with the most. John leans back and rolls on his knees while Alex continues to pump him.

"Oh, fuck, god" John slipped out softly. He's got his eyes shut, his damp long lashes made Alex go wild and so did his hand. John's biting his lip and his inner thigh is withering, the muscle quaking and Alex smirks at it. He's got his eyes glued to John's soft 'v' and Alex licks his lips. He has the cutest body, firm and fuckable. Twinkable. Gorgeous. "Shit, shit, shit -" John mewls.

"Look at you" Alex coos. "That face, fucking hell" because John was pulling the most desperate,
cutest expressions when he was this needy. So hot and fulfilled, brimming like a steaming kettle, ready to burst in minutes. He looked pained too but John needed this evidently.

"Fucking stunning" Whispers Alex and his teeth gritting into his lip is enough to draw blood. They're locking eyes, John licking his own lips but he can't really focus too much on Alex, his eyes keep rolling and closing. His curls fell backwards as his head tipped. "Cutest little thing, aren't you? That's right, you better damn, well, cum for me."

"A-Alexander" John pants. "Fuck"

Alex speeds up again and John is wailing.

John topples over on his back since he couldn't keep his balance on his arms upright anymore, he's fuelled with complete pleasure and his panting filling up the room said it all. "I'm gonna... I'm gonna..."

Alex gives him a few more pumps, another and another then within seconds an eruption of John spluttered all over his stomach, well, what there was of any cum.

John's cheeks flustered at the sight of it. Alex pressed a kiss to his temple. John didn't need to be embarrassed of his lack of swimmers. Alex had noticed before, John didn't seem to cum as much.

He wasn't sure why but it was just something Alex had noticed with John. He never mentioned it.

As Alex was leaning to peck a quick kiss on John's temple, John was dazed and basking in his orgasm. Alex got up off the bed, tossed his journal to the floor and he's already trying to drag off the cover. John tries to frown at him but he was still half gone from their doings. He pumps his cock just because it feels good and stares directly at Alex, who is shaking his head at him and scoffs.

"I've just gave you a hand-job!" He barked.

John smirks and does the lip biting thing that Alex loved.

"No, not gonna work. Get up, I gotta change these." Alex commands but John isn't budging.

He purposely continues to play with himself, tugging his cock there and looks all pretty for Alex. He even goes as far as curling a lock of his hair. Alex rolls his eyes and he's yanking the duvet right off the bed, John isn't light but Alex still manages to at least get him to slide off. It catches John off guard too and he's sliding off his bed and on the floor with the semen soaked duvet.

"Alexander!" John cried. He landed on the floor right on his knees with a thump. Alex could almost feel the force himself. He winces when John does and tries not to laugh. John saw his expression and gives him daggers. "So mean"

Alex scoffed again. "After me just getting you off? Stop being a brat Laurens." He tugged at the sheet for John to budge. "Haul ass, move. I want to throw these in the wash."

John is really pushing it tonight. He's there on his knees looking up at Alex, his hazel eyes mischievous and Alex knows he's far from done messing around. So John then crawls forward to Alex, he's gripping the sides of Alex's waist there on the floor and flips his head, his head whooshing over his shoulder and he's gazing up at Alex as he does.

Alex sighs, he knows what's going to happen.
John, getting his own way. Again.

'All that work sends you into being a real tight ass, doesn't it?" John snickered. "Let me help you loosen up"

He's already working on the elastic of Alex's joggers and shoving them down. Alex doesn't stop him, he grumbles and John giggles as he's shoving them down leaving Alex in his briefs. "I don't know why you even have these on, you're at home."

"It's fucking freezing" Alex's accusing glare makes John laugh even more. Trust John to get himself sick, he barely wore much clothing around the house as it is now that they were - a thing and it was the middle of winter.

"That's why"

John starts to slip off Alex's briefs slowly. "Well, I can work on that. Let me heat you right up."

Within minutes Alex was holding on the poster of the bed, eyes closed and head tilted back as John took him. Lapped up his length and worked on his balls thoroughly. The high sent Alex into a frenzy and after that, John was pushed back down where Alex returned this favour yet again.

But this time, with his mouth.

He really couldn't get enough of this one.

The morning after Alex awakens first and he's already up, ready to work on the next chapter of his book. So far he had managed to get probably half the book completed which he was thrilled about. Plus he wanted to write up his ideas from last night out of his journal.

Alex knew he could get more done but with John latching on to him, wanting to constantly spend time together and with them going out more often, Alex found he lost out valuable writing time.

Alex jumps in the shower quickly and jumped out, he towelled himself like a man possessed before throwing on a top and his pair of joggers with his slippers. At first Alex always dressed up during the first few days there at the Laurens house, but John really didn't care if Alex stayed in his pyjamas all day long.

John told Alex that he had always hated dressing appropriately for his parents. That was why his style was so peppy and having gone to a private school too where John was made to wear a uniform. Casual didn't exist in his family.

Alex found out that John always had to tuck in his shirt around the house if he was leaving his room. Shoes, no socks or bare feet anywhere in the house until sundown. John's father allowed him to keep his hair at the length it was, just as long as John kept it neat in a tight bun or tidy ponytail. Unlike the curly crazy mane it was now that Alex was around.

Also John told him that none of his sisters were ever allowed to paint their nails or pierce their ears. Not even a lick of lipgloss was allowed and Martha hated the rules apparently. John rarely spoke about Martha and Alex assumed it was painful to talk about her since she was dead.
After hearing about the rules Alex couldn't blame John for hating his life here. He wasn't allowed
to do jack shit. Unlike Alex who had pierced his nipple and tongue on a drunken night out at
eighteen. Dyed his hair bright red when he was seventeen before growing it back out to its natural
dark brown state.

Alex had gone through a tragic era of punk when he first discovered all the British top
underground music in Washington's basement, he had an entire lot on dusky old vinyl, then to a
moody skater boy when that was a thing before moving on to the prized emo craze in the early
noughties.

Alex could quite happily say, he had never felt more comfortable than being in his own skin as he
was right now. Just being Alex was enough.

But now that Alex was here John barely ever got dressed and when he did it was the things Alex
nudged him to buy when they were out, cute tight jeans, plaid shirts, colourful tops and sneakers.
He looked more himself in those, John was brighter in spirits and in clothing.

With that Alex tossed his hair into a loose bun there in the mirror and looked over to John who was
sleeping away peacefully in his bed. All their antics the night before must've drained the life out of
him. Alex chewed the corner of his bottom lip when he thought back to them both there.

They had almost come close to fucking, almost. But if it wasn't for John and his cold, sneezing all
down Alex's chest, grossing him out completely, a stunning silver long line of snot right there, then
they probably would've.

Still it just wasn't the right moment yet. John wasn't like the other guys he had slept with in the past
and he was different from Eliza too. John had become special to him, very special in such a short
space of time. It was crazy.

He gave John a small smile in the mirror and then quietly left the room, he took one more glance at
John before quietly shutting his door.

Finally.

Time to write.

Alex decided to grab his laptop, journal, his black coffee and take it to another part of the house.
He didn't feel like the art room today, his bedroom or even the kitchen. Alex sometimes liked to go
on walk walks around the place, it was that big. Alex was still finding parts of the house he had
never been. After all this house had once been a plantation and a mansion open to all the rich back
in the day who stayed here.

Although it wasn't John's fault, Alex did despise John's family history knowing the Laurens
probably held numerous amounts of slaves here over a hundreds years before. The thought of it all
made Alex shudder and made the house feel that extra bit eerie.

John always joked and said it was just an old house but still - history was embedded in these walls,
on this land.
So Alex settled for a spare spot in one of the studies on the east side of the house upstairs. A small room packed with books, an old desk with an antique looking lamp. There were some modern things inside such as the clock on the wall, a few of the cabinets looked like they might be from ikea but the room pretty much kept in a state from eras before. Alex liked it in a way, it was cushy and cosy.

He began working and half way through Alex was busting for the bathroom. He got up, left the room and Alex couldn't remember where the bathroom was from there. There were a few of them scattered around the house though, so, there may be one just by in the east wing.

As Alex is going through door to door he comes across either another study, a meeting room with the grand paintings on its walls, another bedroom.

The list was endless until Alex opens one particular door on the very end of the hall, a smaller dark brown door. It looked older than the rest and although Alex knew it probably didn't have a toilet inside, he opened it anyway. The door was very stiff and required a good tug to yank it open.

"Fuck" He muttered to himself as he pried it open. The door made a hideous creak and dust fell off the top of it. Alex pulled a 'oh shit' face then his eyes drifted to the stairs that led up god knows where.

The stairs were wooden, the smell was very musty and mouldy from inside but Alex's curiosity got the better of him. His sore bladder no longer being paid any attention and that heavy inertia now long gone. Alex wanted to see more of this house and he was going to. Alex looked over his shoulder which was silly since it was only him and John in the entire house but he had to make sure, just incase.

So he's taking the first step up these stairs, they're spaced apart, narrow and creak like crazy. Alex is careful not to trip up and he's finally made it upstairs. He's grabbing the banister to pull himself up that final step and he's looking around into what appeared to be a whole other room. Not an attic just a room that bit higher up.

Then Alex remembered that side of the house from the outside, it had a what looked like a little bit of a tower but not quite a tower. This must be where he was he assumed.

It's dusty, the air muggy and Alex is clearing his throat every two minutes. It's dark inside but the little bit of daylight from the old filthy window helps him. Alex notices there is actually a light switch, an old type, he tugs on the chain and there pops up a light bulb now fully but very dimly lit.

"Jesus" Alex says when he sees the amount of cob webs tattered up there on the ceiling. "When the hell did they last clean this place..." He mutters. "Probably in the last fucking century or so..." and smirks at his own bitchiness.

Alex is walking around and although it's spacious, the dark wooden floor boards creaking every so often. It's cluttered with junk really. Old furniture covered in white sheets. Alex drifts a finger along one of the shelves and grimaces at the amount of dust clogged up on the end of his finger. He makes an 'ew' and rubs it off on the wall. Then walks over to what looked like an old book shelf.

The books were nothing but old documents it seemed, bibles mostly though and Alex wasn't a keen one for religious. He shoved them back and groaned when he saw no book worth really picking up.

As Alex was walking on to the next corner of the room he was too captivated by the old paintings piled up high on one of the shelves, cans of paint keeping them held up and steadied there.
Then Alex didn't see where he was going and ended up tripping over something.

"Shit!" He shouted.

He nearly went falling but luckily he kept his balance and the old piano there caught him. He's wincing after banging into the side of the piano. He knows it'll bruise like a bitch now after today.

Great and John will probably ask what happened. Alex didn't want John to know he had came up here, it felt off limits and Alex didn't know why. Well - no one had ever said it was. But the feeling it gave up here, it wasn't right.

Then he's looking over to whatever piece of shit caused him to almost break his neck and Alex spots it.

Right there.

"The fuck" he murmured and squints at it. Yeah, he was right with what he had seen.

It was a wheelchair.

Alex leans off the piano, grimacing as he does and he's walking slowly to the wheelchair. It's fairly small, enough to be child sized and Alex shifts it. It's old - but not too old to be from another time. The wheels looked as if they were once white now a gross grey colour.

They had little heart pink beads with yellow star ones on the inside of them. Although the chair was filled with dust, Alex saw the back of the seat had Barney and Sesame Street stickers on it.

They were faded but Alex could see make out what they were. Alex stands back up from around the chair and he's giving it a little push. The wheels squeak and one of them doesn't turn properly anymore.

The first thing that came to mind was that one of John's sisters had been in this chair at some point. He wasn't sure if it were Mary or Martha. He already knew Martha was long gone unless she had been sick before she died. John had never told him though and Alex didn't want to ask.

The topic was too sensitive.

Maybe some day he would tell him though. But for now, Alex would leave it alone.

So Alex gives the wheelchair one last glance and push before walking off. A part of him now saddened by the fact a child had been in a chair in this house, that only added to the pile of dread and mystery about the Laurens mansion. With that Alex decided to just switch off the light and leave altogether.

After is last step down the stairs, his hip still murdering from his fall, Alex closes the creaky old door behind him an with one last look at this old door, a pang of sorrow still lingering in his gut, Alex tries to shrug it off and then finally heads off to find an actual bathroom.

A little while later Alex is in his 'mode'. The mode where his fingers are on fire, his mind is at work and his black framed glasses are on. Alex sits back and he's murmuring his words aloud to himself, hunched over his laptop and goes back to writing. That was when he heard the door fly
open and Alex almost shat himself when it did.

It swung open and he's jumping in his seat.

"Jesus fucking christ!" He cries.

John was there in the doorway and he bursts out laughing when he sees Alex's expression. Alex sees its John and he's deflating there in his seat. He scowls at John while he comes on walking over.

"I'm sorry" John chuckled and he's taking a seat on the desk there by Alex's laptop. "Oh my god, your face!"

Alex swats his thigh and crosses his arms staring up at John. "That wasn't funny"

"I had no idea you were in here! Honest, I was just looking in each room quickly." John surpasses yet another giggle. "I was looking all over for you." Now it was John's turn to frown this time and he moves forward, giving Alex a shove in the shoulder. "Why didn't you wake me!"

With a sigh, Alex swindles his chair so he's facing John directly yet diagonally. John leans back there on the desk and he's glancing back at Alex with that gleam in his eyes. He wanted something, Alex knew that look. John probably wanted either a hand-job or a blow-job. It was one or the other and Alex was in no mood.

No matter how cute John was being.

But bless though, he was in this long cable green sweater, his grey pyjama pants which were like leggings and his cartoon turtle socks. Hair all ruffled from sleep still in a messy pony and his nose was red as a fire truck nearly. Alex softened as each moment passed, he couldn't stay moody if he tried.

"John, you're still sick. I thought you could do with the rest" Alex tells him, which was true and the fact that Alex did need to get on with his work.

John softly kicks at Alex's shin and bites his lip before he grins, shaking his head and says, "Oh please, as if you couldn't get away fast enough to come work on your book." Alex had to laugh, John knew him too well now. His brow rose at Alex and he's grinning back devilishly.

"You're supposed to be sick. Go back to bed." Alex says and he's wheeling his chair in further back to his desk. As he goes to start typing again, John pushes the lid of his macbook down and it presses with a 'click'.

Alex fires daggers at John. "John, is there something you actually need? I have a lot to get done and my deadline is -" "

John smirks at him. "Yes, there is. I can't sleep, not without you."

"Baby, I have work to do -" Alex shakes his head as he grinned. He had spoilt John, he really had. This was Alex own doing and he knew it.

As Alex spoke, John shuffled forward and he's pressing up his socked foot on Alex's shin. Rubbing it up and down slowly.

"I am your work though" John surpasses a giggle. "You should focus on me" He sang. "Me, me, me -"
Alex balls his eyes and he leans over to John and clasps John's knees. As he does, John widens his legs open and he's wiggling his brows flirtatiously at Alex. "I'm ready when you are" John joked.

At this Alex shakes his head yet again and spanks the side of John's thigh. "Such a fuckin' brat" John lets out a belly laugh and Alex grips at John's knees.

"You really are" Alex mutters. "I've created a monster."

Then as he's finishing his laughter John holds up a finger before he says, "I'm joking, honest, I'm joking! No, okay. What I was really thinking is that we should get some breakfast" John leans in towards Alex licking his lips. "I want my breakfast"

"Is that all you really want?" Alex presses, his lips cocking upwards into a flirty smile.

John tilts his head, some of the hair falling in his face and he smoothly pushes a strand of it back behind his ear. His eyes baring into Alex and he leans closer, lips ghosting Alex's and John softly presses a kiss against them. "And you"

At this Alex leans back in his chair and he slips off his glasses. John quirks up a brow as he does. "Best feed you then"

As usual Alex is the one cooking up breakfast and the most John really does is butter the toast. Alex got John helping him with the eggs and sausages in the end, since Alex found it worrying how a young man at twenty-one couldn't even flip an egg. They round off with a pot of coffee between them and sit around the table.

"Tomorrow, I think we should head out for breakfast" John says, changing the topic from Alex's latest chapter to breakfast. Alex finishes chewing some toast and makes a surprised 'mmm' as he does.

"Right now, I won't lie but I could chow down some of those blueberry pancakes, extra syrup, maybe one of those chocolate waffle thingies we had last time we were at that pancake house."

John adds.

Alex swiped up some of the yolk with his toast and shrugged. "Sure, if that's what you want. But next time, you're paying." Then he looks over to John who bites off the end off one of his sausages.

"Then it's a date." John says, they're both munching and John is the first to swallow, he then asks, tilting his head as he does, "Oh yeah, I forgot to ask. Why did you go to the east wing earlier?"

As Alex looks back up from his plate to John, he noticed John's expression. He looked fairly concerned. Alex worried if he wasn't supposed to be in the East wing, John's mother said he was welcome all over the house. He didn't understand. Alex arches a brow at him. "Was I not supposed to?" Alex asks warily.

John's expression quickly vanishes and he bats a hand at Alex. "Well, uh, It's just -" A slight pause from John and his eyes fell back to his plate. "You never usually go down that part of the house, that's all."

"I felt like a change of scenery." Alex tells him. He didn't see what the big deal was. "So I found that room, the study, it's a lot quieter."

Once Alex said this John's eyes dart to him. "You could've gone to your room? It's quiet there. I wouldn't have bothered you, I know how important your work is to you." He blurts out.
"John, no offence, but I can never get anything done with you around." John's expression falters and his eyes harden. "As much as I do love spending time together, when it comes to my work, honey, I need my space." Alex tried not to smile as he spoke but ended up doing anyway. John frowned at him. "And anyway, does it really matter, what room I was in?"

He kept his eyes dead set on Alex. "Maybe, a little? It is my house after all." He says coldly.

Alex looked over to side and then back at John, he wasn't sure if he was hearing right. He had been here months now, John never complained yet about him exploring different rooms. This conversation was getting weird. "Like it's ever bothered you before" Alex scoffed.

"Well it does" John fired back and he's fiercely stabbing a piece of sausage. Alex flinches almost as he does, the force is ridiculous.

Then Alex says, "John, baby. This is ridiculous. All I wanted was a room to work in, that's it. I'm sorry if me wandering around has pissed you off and all but -"

"It isn't that" John shoots back.

Alex eyed up John and John is poking around the edges of his eggs with his fork. His thumb twiddling around it. John didn't really have any expression, it was blank. Alex worried whenever John got like this because it usually meant something was up.

He was irritated.

Alex nudges him underneath the table with his foot and quietly calls, "John"

John's mouth twists and his fork continued to prod the yolk, Alex watches it dribble around the sides of his sausages. "I don't care about you working in another study. What I care about is how I found the door leading to the upstairs open. That room is out of bounds, Alexander." He glares at Alex.

"What room?" Alex asked.

He is shocked when John actually sighs at him. "That old looking brown door, east wing, near where you've been working all day. It's been shut for years and now suddenly it's off its hinges?"

Oh that room.

The one with the wheelchair. Alex sat back as he recollected and he drops down his fork with a mighty 'clang'. Alex was starting to feel annoyed himself now. He didn't appreciate how accusingly John was speaking to him.

Well this was the first Alex had heard. "Your mother said I could go anywhere? She never mentioned a forbidden room or some shit?"

"No" John says, his knuckles have gone white from the harsh the grip on his fork. "But I'm telling you. You shouldn't have gone up there."

Then Alex leans his head back in annoyance and stares at the kitchen lights hanging above them. "John, you never told me. She never told me. I had no idea, I apologise. Can we just, skip this?"
Alex exasperates.

"You had no business being up there!" John growls.

Alex feels numb, he really didn't know going up there would cause this much shit.

"I'm sorry!"

"Fine, fine." John hisses. "Just don't go up there again"

Alex looks back to him unimpressed and his eye twitches. "It's an old fucking room" Alex rebuffed. "It was hardly anything amazing, why are you so worked up? My god."

It was John's turn for him to twitch. He looked as if he had just been slapped. "It isn't just an old room. It was... you know what. Forget it." He snaps.

With that John scrapes his chair loudly on the kitchen floor, the sound makes Alex cringe and John is standing up and slamming the chair back under, it hit the table with a force and Alex had to stop their cups from knocking over.

"John!" Alex scolds. "For fuck sake! Watch what you're fucking doing!"

John moodily snatches his plate off the table and he's not even bothering to throw the contents in the trash. He tosses the plate, with the food still on it right into he sink. Well, everything went all over the place.

The sauce up the tiled wall, the plate went down with a good crash so it was already broken by the sounds of it. The entire sink painted with food and broken glass. John didn't even give it a second glance as he did and then he turns on his heels.

Alex's jaw drops as he's watching this scene unfold infront of him.

John really was something.

"Clear that up" John all but sighs. His voice bitter and stare even icier.

Did he really just say that? Alex thought they were on equal terms now. He hated when John got upset and reminded Alex just what he was here for. They were supposed to be together. Help one another, together. Speak to each other, care and love each other.

Together.

John was being secretive and Alex hated secrets.

Alex squints his eyes at John and he's getting up now too, he rushes over to him where he grabs John's wrist and he pulls his boyfriend back from trying to outrun the situation.

"Get back here now" Alex hisses. "The fuck do you think you're doing?!"

At his words John gives Alex one of the coldest looks he had ever received. It sent chills down his spine. "Next time -" John points to him.
Alex flinches his head away from John's accusing finger. It almost poked his eye out. "Next time I'll launch it at your damn head! Get off me Alexander!" He snapped.

For that Alex tugs harshly on John's wrist and John winces at it. Alex wished he could un-hear that. His boyfriend was just angry and ill. That's all it was. He didn't mean it.

But threats, though? Seriously.

"Leave me alone" John spits out venomously.

"You can't run off over something so -" Alex lets out a frustrated groan. He's shaking his head as he does. "John the hell is wrong with you??"

He tries to pull away but Alex always gripped on tighter. "John! Speak to me!"

"Fucking leave me alone!" John cries. He's not looking at Alex, he keeps trying to turn his head away and Alex tries to pull John to him. John turns away again though leaving Alex feeling crushed.

"You need to start talking to me -"

John's eyes are like saucers, he didn't expect Alex to be yanking him backwards and he's scowling at him. "Alex, get off me." He growls. "I'm in no mood"

"Neither am I" Alex spat back. Then he takes hold of John's other wrist and he squeezes them. John did try to pry out of his grasp but he didn't fight it enough. "What is wrong?"

Then this time John slowly turns to look back at Alex and as he does Alex sees how glazed John's eyes are. They're glassy, he's on the brink of tears and Alex's heart softened. Suddenly he feels terrible for forcing John like the way he was, but he had no other choice. John wouldn't speak otherwise.

"I don't want to talk about it" John stresses, his voice was so small. Alex lets go of John and he nods. Fine. "Not right now, I will tell you, someday. Just not right now."

Alex nods again, he respects what his boyfriend tells him and takes a step back giving John some space. John moves away from Alex and he shifts over to the kitchen counter where he leans against it. Head hung slightly and Alex sees him wipe the corner of his eye.

After a moment or so Alex thinks to hell with it all, he moves in on John and he holds out his arms. John looks up at him, he looks absolutely helpless and Alex can't stand it.

"Oh John" He whispers.

Clearly John is upset over whatever is wrong, something about that room and so Alex wraps his arms around him. Where he rocks them both, kisses the top of John's head and whispers how it will all be okay.

"Alexander" John murmured. "I'm sorry - I didn't mean what I said. I wouldn't hurt you."

At his apology Alex holds him tighter and kisses the side of John's head. "I know"

"Ever" John squeaked. "Never, ever."

Alex of course, he forgiving John and he apologizes too.
It was all talk out of anger. He got it.

After they make up, John cleans up his mess through a pile of sniffles and tears, Alex gives him a hand and once they've finished, Alex recommends they get dressed properly and go out to get pancakes like John wanted. Sure they had just eaten but Alex wanted to cheer him up and maybe they could have a chat.

So they did. Alex reconsidered how John must be feeling although he was upset over him trespassing, John was still quite poorly so Alex bathes him quickly and helps John get dressed. John liked it whenever Alex fawned over him, he really did love being looked after and be treated with nothing but adoration. John craved it and it made Alex sad because he could tell John never had this growing up.

He got John in a nice sweater, jeans and his boots. Alex tells him he didn't care if John was sweating his balls off, he was wearing a big thick coat because he didn't want his cold worsening.

It's a nice slow walk back into Charleston and by the time they get there they're both starving again. All the walking has built up an appetite and John complained he felt dizzy. Alex held him up for support most of the way and was glad when they got to the pancake house they liked. John wasn't a light guy.

John gets the pancakes and waffle smothered in chocolate sauce he wanted topped off with a huge strawberry milkshake. Alex couldn't bare staring at what his boyfriend was devouring, while he was just content with his plain maple syrup pancakes and back coffee. John called him 'boring' and tried to shovel in a piece of waffle from his fork to Alex's mouth. For the sake of cheering John up, Alex did as he was told and it got John smiling again.

Waffles and pancakes made everything better.

They spent the afternoon in the town and end up going to see a movie. It had been a while since either of them went to the movies and John slipped out how he used to always go, he was close to someone at some point but he didn't tell Alex anything else other than that.

Throughout the movie, Alex did wonder about who this person was. John had mentioned before today about how he had dated once and how it didn't end too great.

At the thought of anyone else hurting John, it annoyed Alex and he grabs John's hand there in the dark. He's lacing his fingers through John's and tightening his hold lovingly. Alex leans over to John who's already budged right up against him and Alex whispers into his ear "I'm glad you've cheered up". John turns to him, Alex can see the outline of John's freckled face from the screen's light and John is smiling sadly at him. Then John is shifting away from him.

He's still tender it seemed. Alex just hoped John would spill out what was wrong soon.

After their movie Alex recommends they grab a drink at a local bar. Now Alex knew he had to probably be more wary down here in the south whereas in New York, he could openly express all sorts of affection for John on the street. They could hold hands back in New York, kiss and cuddle. Not here, especially when half the state though gay marriage and relationships were just parodies.

When they first got together all them weeks ago, Alex had initiated holding John's hand in public but John had snubbed it. Whispered how some people were staring and that he should lay off. Which of course, this hurt Alex, but he understood.

So they're walking side by side, Alex more closer than John may have liked in public among his
fellow red-neck citizens. The bar is more of a restaurant, it's got gorgeous fairy lights hanging down its windows, a beautiful Christmas tree on the outside and a little post sign with some cute Christmassy meme. They get inside, get seated in the drinking area. It's cushy, quite modern looking for a small town and the atmosphere seemed decent enough.

The place was busy too and at this hour they still allowed kids in. Alex filed in their orders at the bar and came back with a beer for himself but got John a coke. John was legally allowed to drink yet apparently he wasn't too keen on alcohol. John didn't get out enough, which was probably why. Alex had tried to get some down him but John generally didn't like the taste either.

John pulled a face at his pint. "What's wrong?" Alex asked. John had a face like a slapped ass.

Alex sits opposite him with his pint and takes a long swig. John fumbles with the lemon slice in his coke.

"Did you really have to get beer?" John asks sullenly. He wrinkles his nose at the pint of beer once Alex puts it back down on its coaster. Alex blinks at John and wipes his mouth on his sleeve.

"Baby, I need a drink every now and again. Don't start," Alex jokes and he laughs it off. John smirked too but he's rolling his eyes, that attitude was still there then.

Since they were inching back to where they started Alex decided to just go ahead and ask. "Right, so -"

Enough of the bullshit.

He props his elbows there on the table, chin resting in his hands. He's staring back at John who was doing the exact same. John never really cared much for bars, lively places, he always went really stiff whenever they went anywhere.

"What?" says John.

It was weird for Alex because he was used to dating people who were much more outgoing. Enjoyed being out and about. Even Eliza who was a little bit shy and reserved who always spoke calmly, kept to herself, she too enjoyed going places.

But Alex had to remember John's situation was very different. He always had to take it in consideration and cut John the slack. The least he could do was try and cheer up though.

Alex only wished if John opened up then he could help him properly. Maybe even get him some counselling.

"John, I gotta ask. Jesus christ, if I don't ask now, then this tension -" Alex gestures his finger at both himself and John. Watching as he did, John's brow knitted. "It's going to get a hell of a lot worse. I don't want that. So, what's up your ass? Tell me"

John tapped his fingers on the side of his cold glass. He drops his gaze. "Nothing is 'up my ass' Alexander."

"No, there is. There really is. I mean, I've apologised for entering that forsaken, moth-bitten, dusty cavern you seem to be hellbent over protecting," Alex mutters. John's eyes shoot up at him and he's glaring. "I don't get what the big deal is? All I did was go up there, I looked around and the only thing I saw was a few old paintings, piles of old furniture under sheets, a rusty old birdcage, a wheelchair -"
John sees red and he growls out, "That's just it. You saw the chair, *her* chair."

Alex's expression weakens and he looked confused. "What?"

The couple over the next row were staring at them both and John notices when Alex does. They soon look away when John hisses out "The hell are you looking at!" at them and Alex gives John a soft kick under the table.

"John" Alex scolds. "Don't show us up"

Then John narrows his eyes at Alex, saying, "Me? You're the one who brought it up!"

"Only because you've been off with me all day. I thought we were good earlier! And holy fuck, here we are. Back to square fuckin' one and I'm sick of it!" Alex retorts.

John's face darkens. "Shut it"

"No I won't! Don't talk to me like I'm a piece of shit!" Alex bit back. John leaned back, rolling his eyes. Alex scoffed, he really did act like such a moody teenager at times. Alex was nearly thirty - he was getting too old for this shit. "Look just tell me what is wrong! I wasn't supposed to see a wheelchair? Like, for gods sake. I've heard some things, baby, I have but this is just a fucking joke."

The couple over on the next table decided to get up and leave. John glares at them as they do and mutters how they should whip out their phones, film them for the internet since they were so intervened with their arguing. Alex hissed for him to shut up.

John has to take a deep breath and release it. Alex is on the verge of getting up and leaving for the bathroom to throw some water over his face. John was seriously pissing him off.

"It's just... that room was supposed to be closed up. For good." John says much softer this time.

Alex squints at him. He doesn't get it. "What do you mean?"

"That wheelchair, it was my sister's. Mary's and she can't walk." John tells him.

His eyes drop again. "Because of me"

This was a lot much to take in. So not only had the pair of them just screamed at each other in public, disturbing the people close by which was already awful as it was. But Alex had now found out that John's other sister couldn't walk and John had just confessed to being the source of why she was paralysed.

Alex flutters his eyes at John in disbelief. He holds up a hand and goes, "Wait, wait, John what do you mean?"

"I may as well just tell you now, since you're so *desperate* to know." John says snippily. Alex ignores his tone and is staring into John's sad eyes intently.

John takes a breath before he begins, he looked pained. "When I was eleven, Mary was little. It was winter and at the back of our house, there is a lake not too far away and me, my siblings we went ice skating on the lake. It was just after Christmas too."

Alex's heart sank. He knew, he definitely knew what John was going to say. John's smiling a little probably from the memory of that day, the good parts. "Mary, she wandered away from us and the
ice she stood on was weak. She fell into the water." John all but whispered. "It was ice cold."

He taked a shaky breath and Alex goes to take his hand but John moved it away.

That stung.

"She fell through it, she was only four. Me, Henry and Martha pulled her out just in time." John bites his lip and he's using the sleeve of his sweater to dab his eyes. Alex feels so useless, but what is done, is already done. "It was James who saw her go through the ice, if he - if he hadn't of seen her then she would've already been dead." He snifled. "But you know what, sometimes I feel like maybe it would be better if she were." John said bitterly.

"John that isn't true" Alex cut in. "What happened was an accident, she fell through. You couldn't have prevented that." And he's taking a mouthful of his beer. John's coke went untouched.

He shake his head at Alex and slowly looks up at him. "You're wrong, it was my fault. I'm the eldest, I was supposed to look after them. All of them. Instead I was too caught up doing stupid, fucking, tricks." John hiccuped. He's still rubbing his eyes. "My father even said it was."

Alex chewed the inside of his cheek. He bit down on it. John's father had yet again made another unfortunate appearance and the man was long dead. He really did sound like the world's worst father from what John had told him. But this, he shouldn't blame his son over an accident. Any child could've done the same as Mary.

"John, your father was looking for someone to blame. People do that." Alex says softly. "When my mother died, I blamed all the nurses, the doctors, the entire fucking hospital for her death. But there wasn't nothing I could do or anyone else, the cancer got her. Baby, it wasn't your fault. He didn't mean it."

John shook his head. "No, he meant it alright. The way he looked at me, I had never seen him so - so disappointed." He tells Alex quietly. "We were outside Mary's room in the hospital. My mother was with her and Martha, it was just me and my father. He looked down at me, then he said 'This is your doing Jacky' then the way he looked at me -" John pauses, his mouth is open and his eyes are wide terrified.

Alex sees the way John has completely gone. He's stiff and staring into space. Traumatised.

No more of this. Alex was done.

He finishes up his beer and he's off to drag John home with him.

"Right" Alex says over him. "John, finish your drink. We're going home."

But John ignores him, he's still in another world of his own. His eyes glazed and staring into the table. "If looks could kill, I'd already be dead."

That was it.

Alex stands up and he's moving out the booth to John in his chair and he's taking hold of John by his arm. "John, come on. I'm taking you home and you're going to bed."
They're on the way back to the house and it's a long walk with the cold chilly winter air. It's already pitch black dark out, the moon fully lit. The soft rustles of the bare branches above them high as they walk on. There was even an owl hooting from afar. It echoed along with the rustling of the bushes and leaves on the ground.

Alex had to admit it was beautiful.

He looks over his shoulder at John, who is still in a haze. He's looking down at his shoes as they walk on.

"John, you okay?" Alex gently asks him. He takes John's hand and squeezes it.

With a bit of a 'mm' John adds "She was only four"

So they were back to that topic again.

Alex sighs.

He really didn't want to seem insensitive but Alex wasn't up for another emotional conversation about deaths or John's tragic sisterly tales. It was late, he was tired and Alex hadn't been sleeping well because of John. But he was a good boyfriend and cared about John. So he listened.

"It wasn't your fault" Alex tells him again.

John shrugs helplessly.

"It wasn't" Alex says once more. "Is this why you were mad at me?"

"Yeah" John admits quietly. "It brings back the memory all over again. You ever had something happen to you, that's so bad, you actually felt you were living in a nightmare?" Alex thinks to Eliza and the miscarriage. Then to his mother, all frail and dead in her hospital bed.

Yes, he has.

But Alex doesn't want to talk about himself right now. This wasn't about him. He takes their hands and gives them a bit of a swing. "For winter, it's a nice evening. One thing I've started to like since living out here is the peace and quiet. I never liked the quiet before."

John lets out a 'hmm' and it went quiet again. But shortly after he started up speaking once more.

"When -" John says and he looks over to Alex for the first time in which felt like forever. Alex looks to him, he bobs his brow, so John presses on. His voice weaker and it wavers. "When Mary fell into that lake, she had an cardiac arrest. It didn't kill her, luckily, but it felt left her with paralysis in the legs. Well, just below her pelvis. She can't walk or do anything by herself. The muscles in her hands work - just about though." Alex's eyes widen. It sounded awful.

At such a young age too.
"Jesus, that's terrible." Alex said.

John nods along. "Yeah, she's had a difficult life. Now she's in England with one of our aunts, my mother and father couldn't cope with her."

Alex didn't say it but he assumed the Laurens's just didn't want to deal with her. He had already met Eleanor and that spoke volumes just by meeting her. She didn't care about her kids. Alex suspected Henry didn't either much.

They were trophies to brag about to their colleagues, dummies to play with and a vessel to carry on the prized Laurens name. They may be blood but Alex was glad for the Washington's. They weren't bloody and they gave him much more than what John already had.

There was another heavy pang of silence. Alex waits a minute or two before hesitating to ask but ended up doing so anyway.

"Is that why you started, cutting?"

Alex watches John's expression warp into regret. Another nod. "Partly - I mean, she's one of the reasons. But, uh, truthfully I was never really confident in myself." Alex made a snort and John looked to him confused.

"What?"

"Pfft! The hell? You're gorgeous." Alex reals John in and he wraps an arm around his waist. No one was around on their way back, it was just the pair of them and this quiet long path back to the house. Alex rubs a hand up and down John's side as he does. "Honestly, you get so upset. It's silly."

John glanced to him and he looked ever so sad. So broken. Alex's throat closed up at the sight of his face.

"Alexander, you try and be a gay, biracial guy from the south, who not only lost two of his sisters, but had to take shit off his father for years, ignored by his mother and got his ass bullied at school. Not even a public school - fucking private school. That's how low I've stooped. A school full of fucking pompous pussies -" John blabbed. "I couldn't even fight them bastards away!"

He's gone pink in the face and the tears are welling up again. Alex gives his side a pat and a squeeze. But it doesn't work and John stops causing Alex to stop in his tracks too. "I mean for gods sake! Every time I walk around that house, I think back to everything - everything and it kills me some days." John whimpered. "I just want away from here... I hate it here."

"John" Alex calls.

"- need to get away!"

He tries to hide his face from Alex for the second time today, he turns from Alex who is trying to take hold of his cheek. Unable to bare see John like this any longer the only thing Alex can think of doing was this.

Alex grabs his boyfriend's cheeks and he's dragging him into a full blown kiss. Alex can feel John's tears there on the corners of his lips, they're salty and sweet. John kisses him back and it felt good to finally kiss out in public. There was no one around but they weren't inside either. Just them and the winter moonlight. Alex adds another kiss on John's lips as they broke and he's keeping a hand on John's nape, ruffling his curls and kept his head against John's, their noses touching.
"Better?" Alex asks.

John's little smile tugs his heart strings. "A little" He murmured.

"Good" and Alex pops another kiss on his lips and pulls away slowly.

As he did John is wiping his eyes on his coat sleeve. He snorts aloud and sniffs, god he looked so ill. Alex grabs his hand back and they walk on. They were almost home and just as that happened, it began to snow.

An hour passed when they were back at the mansion and Alex had ran them both a hot bath after a light supper.

John on one end and Alex on the other with John's back up against him. Alex had combed out his curls and lavished them with this special conditioner he used specifically for curly hair. Massaged and soothed John's scalp as he did, John ended up resting against him and almost fell asleep. Alex had to wake him up. Nothing heated or heavy happened between them just love and care for tonight. John had been through enough for today.

So Alex finishes up rinsing John's hair out and he's tapping on his shoulder for him to sit up. Alex gets out first and then he's pulling John out. They're both drying themselves, Alex sorts himself out before rummaging John's towel over him and with each end of the towel Alex has hold of, he's warping John in and kissing him. John smiles into it and it turns into a five minute make out session there on the edge of the bath tub. The pair laugh when they topple back in.

Then they're dressed in some boxers and in Alex's bed for the night. It was already past twelve by now and usually they would stick on a quick movie but not tonight. With the room dark and only a trace of the moonlight showing through, it felt soothing and calmer just to be together without any background noise. After the emotional rollercoaster of a day the two of them have had. They needed peace.

John more so than Alex.

The next morning was better. More positive, John was smiling again and Alex was just happy to see, well, John happy.

They're together in John's art room and while Alex is writing in his journal, John passes Alex something. Alex looked up at John, opposite him on the other side of the table and he's holding up a piece of paper. "What's this?"

"Open it" John says with a bright smile.

Alex unfolds the paper and as he does, his eyes widen. John's grin does too and Alex lets out a "wow". It was a pageful of beautifully sketches flowers of all kinds around the whole page circling in on what appeared to be Alex there in the middle and John. Both of them with their heads together, Alex laughing and John coyly smiling. Birds and butterflies around them too. It looked absolutely amazing, John's features looked perfect and he had caught Alex's smile dead on point.

"John - my god. This is fucking beautiful!" Alex gasps. He gets up and runs around the table to give John a huge hug, he crushes him and John is whimpering how it's too tight.

"Alex-ander!" John cries.

Alex just tightens his hold. "Not letting you go - ever." John's eyes went wide at that statement. Then they closed and he's nuzzling into Alex's neck. "This is gorgeous, I love it. Thank you, Jack."
At that John froze and Alex worried if he had said the wrong thing. His grip on John loosens and he looks to John as he pulls away. John is just dabbing his eyes and he shakes his head as he laughs it off. "You okay?"

"Yeah, sorry. I'm just really happy. I've been working on it for weeks... after yesterday. I just wanted to give you something to make up for me being an ass." John tells him. He caresses one of Alex's cheeks, his thumb swiping over Alex's stubble and he smiled. "Thank you, for just being here. Alexander."

Alex shakes his head and he sits on the table, facing John. He's eyeing the drawing of them, smiled at it fondly. "Hey - I have an idea"

"Hm?" went John. He's still soothing in circles on Alex's cheek.

"Do you like the idea of well, maybe, spending Christmas together -"

John chuckled. "We're already doing that, you idiot."

Alex laughed with him.

Of course they were. John stares at him intensely as he waits and Alex cleared his throat.

"Well, yeah, but I meant, how about you come with me." He said and John's eyes lit up.

"Back to New York?"

Chapter End Notes

Gosh I haven't updated all week! Honestly I have been so busy and just lethargic at that too. I apologise for the late update and I know it is a bit dramatic... you'll all see why the chair matters in the near future and other secrets are going to unravel themselves :p but for now you all must wait patiently!

Thank you so much for the comments! They always push me to go on and I appreciate every one of them! Also all the kudos! It means the world guys! <3

I will update "Yes, You Are Enough" soon! A lot of people are enquiring for the next update and it will be soon I promise! Thank you for your patience and keep an eye out for the next chapter. x
It was a week later and Christmas was nearing.

John had agreed on going to New York with Alex but it was only for Christmas. They both decided it would probably be more fun and Alex was hellbent on showing John around the city, even if it was crazily busy. Which it will be because it's New York - duh.

But they could always cover the basic sightseeing spots, statue of liberty, memorial sights, times square, grand station and leave it at that. Alex felt a tint of shame taking John back to his apartment though. It didn't real live up to any real standards or come close to what John knew as 'comfort' or home.

They were currently having this discussion and hanging baubles on the tree. Even though they weren't spending Christmas here at the house.

It was only a fake tree, John told Alex that usually they would always have a real huge pine tree each Christmas. But with his mother away, she wasn't ordering one to be delivered and the real tree always looked amazing since she would have it ordered to be up nicely for the entrance way. So that resulted in Alex helping John carry up the old dusty fold up tree from the basement.

The thing had been crawling with spiders, dust and old baubles from god knows when. Majority of them had fell and smashed on the floor when they had picked it up down in the basement though. But John had a box of spare ones and other decorations they could hang up around the main parts of the house they visited often. Since the whole house was just far too big to be putting decorations up and they didn't always go everywhere else within the house. So there was no point.

Currently the pair of them were sat in the living room, dressing up the bare old tree, some hot drinks at hand in cute christmas mugs John had spotted from when they went to Target the other day.

Alex taps John on his shoulder for a second and as John turns, looking over his shoulder, Alex surprises him with a quick kiss. Then another which left them in tucks of giggles, Alex's arms around John's lithe waist and they're just holding each other before continuing with the decorating.

"So, what's your apartment like?" John asks, he's currently giving the old dusty star for the top of the tree a wipe down.

Alex is fixing another old bauble on one of the branches. "It's nothing extravagant put it that way. So don't be surprised when you think it's like a cardboard box."

John hummed in interest. Alex snorted at him. "What?" he asked.

After wiping down the star, John grabbed out some other baubles covered in dust and started cleaning those too. John shrugged as he said "Alexander, I don't care about that. Honestly I'm kind of excited."

Alex made a face at him. "Why?"

He looked over to John cross him sat by the fireplace. "I get to sleep in your bed" John bites his lip
and he darts his eyes to Alex. "Your actual bed" He giggled. Alex rolled his eyes and threw a spare duster over at John.

John mutters an 'oh my god' and he's grabbing the duster, throwing it back at Alex who swiftly moves out the way. He's laughing and pointing at John childishly. "Ha!" Alex shouts.

"Fuck you" John laughed. "Here I was, being cute and telling you how excited I am to visit your place. Now - you're throwing shit at me!"

"Only because you're perverted as hell" Alex chuckled.

At that John raised his brow sassily and spat out, "Like you aren't"

Alex gave John a knowing look as he's walking around him and he has some stockings at the ready for the fireplace. He grabs out the box of nails from the pocket of his jeans and that was when he realised, no hammer. "Hey John, just pass me over the hammer" Alex says and he's marking the mantel piece with a pencil for each hole so the stockings will be evened out.

John sighs, ever the enthusiastic and he's still wiping down some of the baubles. "Sure, where is it?"

"I left it in the kitchen" Alex said as he dabs on another marking. He can hear John shift around there behind him.

Then within the next few minutes Alex felt a light tap on the back of his head and he looks over to John who is stood behind him, smiling, eyes squinting, hammer in hand. Alex jumped back into the mantel piece gasping. John snickered and he hands Alex the hammer.

"You're such a dick" Alex mutters as he takes hold of the hammer.

John laughs and as he does he is slowly wrapping his arms around Alex's neck. "Your face - it's only me in here!" He chuckled. "Who else would it be" John goes to lean his forehead against Alex's in a loving manner but Alex shoves him off. He doesn't look too impressed.

"Oh don't take it to heart" John says as he laughed. As Alex goes to grab some nails and the hammer, John swivels Alex around by his shoulder and he presses a kiss against his lips. As they break away, Alex was left smiling and huffing. "Its a joke!"

"You know that was creepy, right?" Alex muttered. "Not only am I stranded in a big mansion in the middle of no where -"

John scoffed and tries to look offended. "It's Charleston, not the desert."

"Then I have you, with a hammer at the back of my skull" Alex shakes his head. He's turning to go and hammer in one of the nails now. As he does John paces at his side, watching him. "As if you can't say that's not creepy, you doin' some psycho shit"

At that John fluttered his long lashes at him. "But I'd make a cute psychopath, right?"

"So, you're saying you are one?" Alex arches a brow at him.

John was the first to snort aloud and then so did Alex.

"I'm full of surprises" John tells him.

They both had to admit, it was funny. Dumb but funny. Alex liked it when they were being like
this, joking around, kissing and making up after one of them had just done the other over or made 
fun of each other. When seeing John smiling, belly laughing and them dimples on show, it made 
everything better. John looked better.

"Alexander" John sings playfully. He's smirking and he yanks the hammer out of Alex's hand. Alex 
furrows his brow and John makes a pose as if he were about to beat Alex's brains in and goes, 
"Here's Johnny!"

It was so bad.

Alex closes his eyes for a moment and stifles a laugh while John was creasing. "That wasn't even 
funny, you're so - oh my fuck" Alex tries to hold in more of his laughter, he's taking the hammer off 
John and he's biting away his smiling as he hammers in another nail. "Such a dumbass"

John takes one of the stockings from on top of the mantel piece and he starts hanging them up. 
Alex continues his hammering.

"Hush, you love it when I wind you up" John giggled. He pokes Alex in the side. "I'm only joking, 
dummy."

Alex flinches as his prod and shoots John a look. John bites his lip, looking all the bit more 
mischievous and he's rose his brows as he does. Alex budges away and that only makes John move 
closer to him. He prods Alex again and this time Alex mutters for him to 'fuck off' and John 
doesn't. He moves behind Alex and he's grabbing Alex's sides.

John knew how touchy and tender Alex could be around his stomach, he had very small love 
handles too. John squeezes them and this has Alex clamping the hammer down on top of the 
mantel piece and he's glaring at John as he turns around.

"You just had to push it" Alex growls and he's taking John by his waist.

Once he has him, John's expression turns a bit too smug for his liking. So then Alex has John 
stagging backwards as he pushes him forwards and John is flying on the long sofa. It's large and 
cushy, room for probably twelve people on the thing. John makes an 'mph' as he lands on his back 
and he's watching Alex intensely, fire roaring in his hazel eyes and he's biting his lip again as he 
sits up there.

Alex is clambering on top of him, he grabs John roughly by his pony tail and he's tilting his head 
up, John doesn't even fight back. He loved it when Alex toughened up and roughed him around 
like a rag doll. With Alex there on top of him, a leg at the side of him and his other dangling off 
the sofa, Alex pulled him into a kiss.

John kissed back and they're laughing between a mixture of soft squelching noises of their saliva, 
tongues roped around each other's and the occasional clanking of teeth.

Alex felt his flesh rapidly heating. They exchanged another volley of tongues and Alex let out a 
surprised grunt when he felt John's hand drift down and lithe fingers clutch at his cock through his 
jeans.

As John's fingers toyed with Alex's length, he pulled free from their kiss with a look of want on his 
face.

"Damn, John..." Alex panted. John's hand began kneading Alex's rapidly responding member 
through the denim.
His breath was hot in Alex's ear as he growled, "It's now or never" said John. "Are we going to?"

Alex knew what John wanted. He had been wanting the same too, for weeks on end now. Sex, sex, sex pulsing through his mind. He was aware John may be getting impatient with him but Alex still didn't feel like the timing was right. Not yet.

So Alex turned his head, his own voice made husky by his lust.

"I would love to fuck you Jack…" Alex whispered back, "But not tonight."

At his words John made a little heave through his nose and smiled softly with a nod. He's reaching a hand to the back of Alex's head and he's taking out his bun. Alex's hair falls against his shoulders and John twists a finger around a lock of his dark brown hair. Alex's hair was always silky soft, smelt like almonds and ginger.

"When" John says, although it's more like a mumble. His voice tinted with sleep.

Alex sits up, he's still gazing hazily down at John. "When it's right"

"It is right, though, it's always been right" John tells him. "Since we first got together"

Then Alex prods John's nose. "Don't rush it" John gives him the cutest pout and Alex prods him again. "It'll be worth the wait, I promise." John chuckled as he sits up with Alex and goes to grab the silver tinsel off the floor.

"It better be" John mutters.

As he takes it John flirtatiously swarmed his arms around Alex's neck, placing the tinsel behind him and he pulled him in as he giggled for that extra kiss.

Alex smiled into it and closed his eyes. "It will" Alex whispers against his lips and an extra peck for good measure, leaving John all but breathless and his hazel eyes full of adoration for Alex.

They finish off decorating the living room and the Christmas tree. It takes them over an hour to finally get it all sorted and when it's done they resort to the kitchen for some hot drinks. Coffee for Alex and John a mug of hot chocolate the way Alex made it for him. Frothy and milky.

Just as Alex had promised he helped John start to write up an application for college and his personal reference. During the week they had gone into town and Alex had got some information about colleges that may be of interest to John.

The pair of them were lay on John's bed and Alex was typing up a basic starting point for John. But Alex had told John he had to finish the rest off himself. However John got out of it by whining that he wasn't the best at writing essays and that Alex should since he was his boyfriend thus a writer. So that was what Alex was now doing, writing up John's statement and references, it was already midnight.

Alex lets out a heavy sigh and leans back from his laptop. John is busy sketching him, yet again and Alex drifts his gaze to John who is busy shading in locks of his hair. Alex had to admit the whole piece was on point and the way John could waft the tip of his pencil, creating shine and
shade was beyond amazing. It was so life-like.

"Do you ever get bored of drawing me?" Alex asks, he needs a break from writing. His back was cramping and his fingers were starting to actually really hurt. He felt as if carpal tunnel was just on the horizon.

John shakes his head as he carries on shading. "Nope, never. You're one of my favourite things to draw, so don't complain" Alex sees the little smile on John's lips.

But seriously, John needed to be doing this himself. Alex didn't mind helping but with John's lack of input, it wasn't easy. "Sure, cute" Alex says blankly. "Yeah but I need you to take over soon, my back is murdering me sat here and my fingers ache. Also only you can really write up your statement, since it is about you, your experiences, your achievements -"

"I don't care about any of that" John said carelessly, as waved him off. "Just make some shit up"

Alex snorted. "Baby, no." He saw the way John's face dropped.

Still Alex didn't care, he had to tell him. "it's your reference, only you can provide the info and also -" John's eyes flickered up at Alex moodily. He never really liked being interrupted when he was busy drawing or crafting. Alex noted that was when John usually became irritated or snippy. But he was used to it now from John.

Just then Alex slid off a couple of pamphlets off the nightstand there from under his journal. Then he plopped them on top of John's drawing and John's brow crumpled. "Alexander, the hell?"

"Colleges" Alex tells him simply. John starts to flicker through the first one, the disinterest evident there on his face and he's nudges it aside to then go through another. Alex rolled his eyes, he shifts the laptop off his knee and the pillow from under it so he can stretch his legs. "Oh try and show a bit of enthusiasm, jesus christ."

Then John sits up and takes one of the pamphlets, he holds it up to Alex with an annoyed look on his face. Alex arches a brow, he didn't get it. What had he done wrong this time.

"Yes, colleges. But why these?" John mutters and he looks at the pamphlet like he is disgusted. Alex leaned his head back against the headboard and closes his eyes for a long moment before reopening them at John. "Alexander" John grits. "I don't want to go to Clemson university, University of South Carolina or fucking Furman university!"

Alex sighs aloud. "Then where do you want to go?" he stressed with his arms out, then they dropped there on either side of the bed. John's shoulders slump and he looks away from Alex. "I'm trying here John! I'm making an effort for you, I'm doing all the work, for you. Because I care! I've sat here all night, writing up stuff you should be damn well doing and I went out my way to get you those!" Alex gestured to the pamphlets there in John's hands. "Can't you just be a bit more grateful? I'm trying."

"But I don't want to go to those Alexander!" John hisses.

Alex's eyes went wide. "Then why don't you start looking for some? Don't shout at me John!"

"You're shouting right back!" John cried. Then in a swift instant John smashes a fist down there on the bed. The pamphlets and Alex's macbook wobbled as he did. Alex backed up as this happened closer to the headboard.

John sees this and he's reaching a hand out to Alex and then he slowly withdraws it, his mouth
open as if he were just about to say something. John looked ashamed of himself, his emotions always got the better of him at times and he holds up a hand to Alex before dropping it.

Alex roamed a hand over his face. This was stupid.

"John" Alex says much more calmer this time. "Can you just understand, I want to help. That is all I am doing."

Then there was heated silence between the pair of them. John staring back at Alex and Alex glaring at John. John's scowl softened and he nods, his thumbs are smoothing down on one the glossy front covers of the pamphlets and he heaves a small breath. "I know, I know. I'm sorry." John tells him, his voice hoarse.

He hated bickering with Alex just as much. Alex knew he was sorry. Alex just wished John wouldn't lash out like that.

"But why South Carolina?" John says in a small tone.

Alex narrows his eyes, he didn't follow. "What?"

"I mean, we're together. Why wouldn't I pick here?"

"I, we're together. Why here?"

"John, it's where you live. Why wouldn't I pick here?" Alex said back. He's still narrowing his eyes.

But John shakes his head. "No" He says. "Not here, I want to be with you." His voice rises at the last part. Alex shuffles over to him there on his backside, he smooches to John and takes one of his hands. He squeezes it.

"Baby, we are together. I don't get what you mean. John, you don't have to worry about that -" Yet again John cuts Alex off. His hazel eyes intent. "It isn't that! You're going back to New York in the next few months and it isn't even that long away. You're going back." John muttered bitterly. "I'll be stuck here, by myself. I can't -" His voice croaks and his face crumpled. Alex moves in and he wraps his arms around John there, he rocks them both.

"That doesn't mean anything" Alex said. "I can ask your mother if I can extend the stay then, it's fine."

John nests his face into the crease of Alex's neck. His hands lock around Alex's mid-section of his back. "It isn't that... you'll have to go back for good at some point. We both know it." John whimpered. That was true, they both knew it. Alex didn't actually, really, live here. He had a life back in New York and he needed to go home eventually.

Alex's silence grates John and it has him blurt out with, "I want to go to college in New York" At his words Alex steadies John back from him and he's got a look of surprise on his face. John's arms are still around him and he's looking concerned, as if he may had suggested the wrong thing or something bizarre. "Alexander?"

"You want to go to one in New York? Wait, what? fuck sake, John." Alex stammered.

Then John smiled and he leans in to peck Alex on the cheek. "I want to be closer to you, if I'm in New York, then, we can be together. Properly."
When Alex thought about it though, really thought about it, he suppose John could get in. The Laurens's had the money, his mother Eleanor could probably get him without issue. Bribe half the broad or threaten them somehow.

Also it may bring some joy and sense of peace to her knowing John was actually attempting to do something in his life. Other than sleep the day away and live in his art room.

He could finally start living. Alex's heart swelled at the thought. "That couldn't be such a bad idea" He says to John. Alex grinned back at his boyfriend. John's hands tightened around his back. "With your connections, family status and shit, it wouldn't be impossible"

"I guess not" John admits. "I don't care - as long as I'm with you. That'll be more than enough for me" Alex can feel his face heat up and he never blushed. Ever. But John, god John. He brought it all out of him. All these scrambled emotions.

Alex gives him a kiss right back and kisses John's nose, though, it earns him a swat on the shoulder. They pull apart laughing.

"It's far away from here, you know and it is a lot different to Charleston, baby." Alex adds, he tries to sound serious. John shrugged his shoulders. Alex scoffed and pressed on, John had to understand. New York wasn't the same.

"Don't you think I know that? It's a big city. And?" John shrugs once more.

New York was more than just a city. It was Alex's home for that matter and one of the busiest cities in the entire world. John needed to prepare himself for what was to come if he was serious about coming to New York. Even the trip alone this Christmas back to New York had Alex a little worried about John.

He didn't know how John would react around queues, endless crowds of people and buildings that touched the sky. John acted confident about going to New York for Christmas whenever it was brought up but Alex didn't know if he was bluffing or not. Still, there was always one way to find out. Just take John and see how he got on.

"I'm just concerned that you might be a bit overwhelmed" Alex tells him. He gives John a small smile. John tilts his head at him and he smiles back. Clearly touched that Alex was always thinking of him.

"You don't have to worry, Alexander. I'll be alright." John said. "You'll be by my side, with you with me, I feel like - like I can do anything." He finishes with a soft sigh. Alex chuckled.

"Such a sap" He comments and John forcefully pushes Alex on his back. He falls backwards and John lies beside him, they jilt there on the mattress, Alex reaches a hand to steady his macbook from falling off the bed and he can hear one of the pamphlets fall on the floor with a smack.

John leans over him to give Alex a big kiss and caresses the side of his face. Fingering Alex's stubble. "I really care about you" John says to him. "I do appreciate you, I really do. I know I can be difficult. Alexander, I know. But with you, with me, I can do this. College. New York. Since I've met you, you've changed me. I want to change more." John whispered.

Alex grinned widely. He was glad to hear that.

Then John looked to be insecure. His expression weakening and hazel eyes dropped. "I want to be a better person" He says. At this Alex took a strand of John's hair and twisted it. Then he let go and watched the curls coil back to their natural pattern.
"You are already a good person, you don't need me for that. You're talented and smart. You are all those things, that's before we had even met yet." Alex can't help but chuckle.

However John's face said otherwise.

He didn't look too sure of Alex's words and Alex knew when John was faking it by now. Whenever he was having a good day or a bad day. John's depression did play a big part some days, Alex had to drag him out of bed sometimes, bathe him, tell him it would be okay.

Now that he understood John more after their discussion about Mary's paralysis and the bullying. John had been through so much. He really was fragile. That was another reason why whenever John flipped out or had one of his mania moments, Alex always tried his best to lay off John. Cut him some slack because he didn't really mean it. John couldn't help it. So instead of going off at him Alex usually let John vent it out and allow him to soothe himself.

So when John ever gave Alex that look of uncertainty or a false smile. He knew and that was what John was doing now. Something wasn't right.

"I want to see all of New York" John buries himself into Alex's chest there. He smiled at the thought of his city and ruffled John's log curls. "It's always somewhere I've wanted to go, you see it in the movies, read about it in books and see it in paintings. It's amazing."

Alex nods and says, "It's one of the greatest cities in the world. You can be your own man there, John, I promise. But why have you never been before?"

John's brow knits. "Huh?"

"Haven't you been on one vacation at least?"

A sigh from John. "I've never had anyone to go New York with, my parents always went." Alex hummed, that made sense. They were senators and all. His foster father Washington was always up state himself. Alex could imagine John's mother getting in with all the fancy busy-bodies in Connecticut, Nantucket. it wouldn't surprise Alex if she had a place over at the Hamptons. But as for the Laurens children, John and his siblings had never been given the time of day.

"Mostly for business trips. It was always work related. We only ever went on one family holiday, years ago when I was a small kid. It was in Florida, we stayed at a beach house on the coast. Just my mother, father, Martha, James, Henry, Mary and me."

Then that was when Alex remembered. The photograph by John's desk. The one when they're on the beach and the same one with John's father's face scratched out. It was as if John had just read his mind, he was staring at Alex blankly before sitting up and he was up on his feet. Alex called for him as he watched John go over to his desk.

Alex watches him swipe the photograph and he's coming back over to him. John crawls back on his bed and he's passing Alex the photograph. It's old and grainy but the quality isn't too bad. Alex takes a good and long look at it. John goes to his side, sitting by him and rests his chin on Alex's shoulder. He presses a kiss on it as he does.

"That's us" John said to Alex. He points at his parents "Mother, father -" and then to his siblings. "Henry, he's the second oldest brother, he's great at baseball and football. That's little James or Jimmy, whichever you wanna use, he's the science nerd." Alex had to smile. They were so like John. Then John tapped on the little girl in his father's arms, "Mary, back when she could walk"
and Alex reached for John's other hand, he laces their fingers and squeezes it. Alex didn't miss how John's voice wavered. And he pointed to the last sister.

"Martha?" Alex finishes. The little girl with the ice cream who was squinting at the camera. Loose curls and freckled from the sun.

John nods. "Yeah, that's her"

"She was beautiful" Alex says softly. Because she was, a female version of John. Minus the darker eyes and curls.

Alex looked over to John who was still studying the picture. He looked lost in thought. "You okay?"

"Yeah, I'm just thinking." John presses another kiss on Alex's shoulder. "Like the last thing me and her ever spoke about... stuff like that. I loved her a lot you know. She was my best friend."

"She was?" For Alex it was always difficult to imagine siblings. He had always been on his own and didn't have any biological brothers or sisters. Well unless his father had any to another woman. But Alex was past giving a fuck about his real father.

"Mm, always told each other everything. Well, thought we did." Alex turned to him with a questioning expression. But John ignored it. "Wherever she is, I hope it's just better. Y'know." Alex understood that. He hoped the same for his dear mother.

John looked fairly jaded and he leans his head into Alex's. "I scratched out my father's face" he said quietly.

"Why?" Alex just had to ask.

As John nestled himself closer to Alex he said, "You really want to know something"

It was the way John said it. Alex felt like he was about to find out a big secret. So he responded with, "What?"

John released a breathy "ha" under his voice and he leans off of Alex, he then gently takes Alex's cheek and he guides Alex to look him there in the eyes. Alex looked a bit clueless, he didn't get what was happening. Then John is smiling, a cold glimmer in his eyes. It sent chills down Alex's spine. He had never seen John look at him like that before.

"Alexander, the day that man died was the best day of my entire life." John almost sounded too giddy. Alex went numb. He didn't know what to say, how could he respond to that. Sure he knew John didn't see eye to eye with his father but that was something else.

"Damn" Alex lets out. John takes the photograph out of Alex's hands and looks over it again. Alex notes the way John's eyes scanned it, darkly. His smile wasn't warm or loving as if he were remembering a good day out. It was forced, bleak. The hate in John's eyes told him so. "Baby, I'm lost for words." Alex snorted at himself. "That's a first..."

After John gives a soft 'mm' Alex is taken aback when John is immediately shredding the photograph seconds later. Alex's jaw drops, his eyes wide and he reaches out to try stopping him.

"John!" Alex cried. "What are you doing?!!"

As he tries to stop, John is having trouble ripping the next half since the photo is quite tough. He
shifts to the other side so Alex can't reach him. "The hell does it look like I'm doing!"

"Why would you do that!"

And the pieces of the photograph were all over the bed, John shredded piece after piece, Alex just watched as he finished and he shakes his head. "John, why?" It made no sense. John keeping it and then all of a sudden it was ruined.

John scoops all the pieces of the photograph together there on the sheets. "Because, I'm sick of seeing it. Their faces, memories. I don't want it anymore."

Alex scoffs. "You might in twenty years time!"

But he shook his head at Alex. "I hardly doubt that" John says. "I don't need that family, not anymore."

The pieces of the photograph were being trickled through John's fingers. He played with them. Alex still looked shocked.

"John I think -"

And John suddenly turned back to him, spitting out, "You're my family now." John told him. His eyes were back to normal, full of life and warmth. Alex bit his lip as he considered John's words.

Family.

John wanted to be a family with him.

It meant a lot to him, of course but Alex didn't want him ripping up pictures. John may want them in years to come. These spurges of anger he had, it was something they really needed to work on in the future.

"You, no one else. I want to leave here, study in New York, live with you. Maybe get a place together" John exasperates. Alex is trying to take it all in at once, this was so much to consider. John hadn't even stepped foot in New York and now he was talking about living there. It was crazy.

"Wait John -" But he was relentless with his words. Alex could only sit back and listen.

John shakes his head at Alex, "No, listen. Alexander, please listen. I've been thinking about it so much, I think I will like New York. I know I haven't been there yet. I don't care. I didn't want to say all of this because, well, maybe it would scare you off."

Alex frowns, "You wouldn't ever scare me off and you aren't John."

"No but it's full on, I know that. I know. But my family has money, I can get hold of it easily. My mother would do anything to get rid of me, whether I was with a man or a woman." John was totally sarcastic about the last part. Even Alex had to smile and roll his eyes. "She wouldn't care. So it's possible for us to be together there in New York and I know, you want this just as much as me, right?"
His hazel eyes were hypnotising and Alex was led to nodding. He could never say no to John, ever. But he wanted that too, he needed John when he thought about it. John filled that empty space. Alex was given such a rough start in life, too many empty spaces. Too many losses. If Alex had to leave the Laurens house tomorrow and never get to say goodbye to John, he didn't have a clue what he would do. Now that he knew what he would be missing.

They needed each other.

"I need to hear you say it" John said to him as he comes closer to Alex and he grips Alex's forearm. "You want this too, right?"

"I do" Alex says as he smiled. "I do, honest."

Well, that was all John needed to hear. He looked satisfied with his answer and leans his head back on to Alex's.

"Good, I just needed to hear it. That's all." John says as he snuggles into Alex.

For the rest of that night Alex sat there finishing up John's personal statement. John was already fast, sound asleep, not even changed out of his shirt and jeans. But Alex didn't have it in him to wake John. He was on a roll with his writing, his fingers had life in them again and his mind was at work. It was a little difficult trying to get it all done while John's arm was wrapped around his waist, face buried in his side and the laptop was burning his legs. But it was worth it.

Alex gazed down at John, he pushed up his glasses and smiled at the sight. He looked so peaceful, so helpless. He tousled gently and carefully at John's curls. Then Alex looked over the the pile of torn photograph pieces on the stand. He still couldn't believe John would do that.

That was when Alex thought of something.

He wondered if John ever had any social media accounts. John had never really said or spoke of social media, he said he wasn't good at computer stuff but Alex wanted to find out anyway. Surely some of John's family were online, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube. He knew it would be the brothers he was looking for since Mary was disabled.

Luckily enough Alex had invested in a wifi package and had it set up the other day. It didn't cost much a month though. John hadn't really been showing much interest in it and had moaned at Alex for always being online. John said he didn't care much for social media or any of it. Alex on the other hand had been hungry, starving for the good ol' web. He was thrilled he didn't have to trek out into the town just to go online at a local cafe or coffee shop.

God - it had been so long.

So Alex popped up Facebook and there he was searching away for John's two brothers. He tried James first, there was so many James Laurens's and Alex gave up after the first twenty he scrolled past. All in different states and countries. Nope.

Then he tried Henry Laurens and within the first fifty, Alex managed to find a young man who looked like he held the Laurens look. Freckled, biracial, curly hair and that specific smile when they all smiled. He only looked to be in his late teens, no more than eighteen at the very least.
As Alex clicked on him he immediately went to the information and what a surprise - South Carolina, Charleston. It said he also studied at The Hotchkiss School over in Connecticut. With that Alex went to his photos, he was in sheer luck because Henry's profile wasn't on private.

There Alex saw pictures of many of his friends, Charleston, there was pictures of the house, old ones because there was maids around. Also ones of James in the shots. James and Henry looked really close, Alex smiled. They looked so bright and happy. Like younger versions of John with darker shorter hair and eyes, except they looked normal.

Normal.

John was normal. Alex knew that but John was different. John was John. He had been through hell.

Alex chews his bottom lip as he continues scrolling through random pictures of this boarding school Henry is at, some of Henry's friends messing around with remote control drones, cigarette ashtrays and some mountain dew, someone's cat dressed up in a bumble bee costume and food. Henry has shit tons of pictures when it came to food. Jesus.

It was virtually all random shit until Alex finally found one of John.

His eyes widen and he clicks on it. But Alex is sure to check on John as he does, John is still snoozing soundly. Good, it's all good. So he turns back to his screen and zooms in.

This picture is old because John is in what appeared to be his school uniform. He's grinning smugly, looking right at the camera and he's got his elbows resting on two other guys. One a taller guy with brown short hair who's giving a finger to the camera and another, blonde, white looked slightly weedy. Alex tried not to laugh because this guy is trying to hard with his 'gangsta rapper' pose. It's so cringeworthy.

But that was definitely John. His face younger, boyhood still evidently visible and his hair that bit shorter. Alex had to admit, John looked adorable. He made the perfect twink. It sounded so wrong but he looked so pretty.

Shame rose within Alex, he had to razzle his hair and take a breath because this thoughts were terrible. Sinful. Ones he could have been locked up for if John was still in that school uniform. Since Alex would've been in his early twenties during that time still. They were seven years apart - but still.

Alex did wonder about who the other guy, the brunette, angry looking one and he tapped on the picture. Apparently this guy's name was "Charles Lee" and the other odd ball was called "Samuel Seabury". Interesting. Then Alex taps on John and John had been tagged, great so that meant he had an account. Alex clicks the link and pops up an account with nothing. Nothing was there.

Alex huffed. John had Facebook at one point then.

Then he clicked back and that was when he saw the comments. Alex totally forgot about the comment section and he's surprised when there is a ton of them underneath.

They weren't pleasant either.

Charlz Lee: Why am I still tagged in this bullshit? Take it fucking down Laurens
Henry J Laurens: It's been up for for four years! Why now?

Charlz Lee: Cuz I said so!

Henry J Laurens: Are you still sore my brother beat yo ass?

Charlz Lee: NO ITS BECOZ YOUR BROTHER IS A FUCKING PSYCHOPATHIC NUT JOB!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!11

Alex's eye twitched at that.

Henry J Laurens: Fuck you Lee

Charlz Lee: Untag me now or I'm reporting! Fuck you and fuck your sick fuck brother! I mean srsly! who even tries to stab someone in the gym room!!

Henry J Laurens: He never did such thing

Charlz Lee: YES HE DID! YOUR BROTHER IS MENTALLY DERANGED

Henry J Laurens: You need to quit making shit up about John! we ALLLLL know it was YOU who made that hate page! "JohnLaurensisanutjob2k13" seriously dude get a LIFE!!

Charlz Lee: FK U

And that was it.

Apart from the boyish squabbles after that Alex was left fairly stunned. He didn't believe any of it though, that Charles guy looked like he was full of shit and was lying. Probably just stirring the pot
over something that happened with John. Alex rolled his eyes and thought nothing of it.

But he had an itching feeling over this 'hate' page. Alex types the exact wording Henry had used into the search engine there and popped up "JohnLaurensisanutjob2k13". It was real, actually real. Alex's eyes filled with rage and fire. He couldn't believe some dickhead would be sad enough to actually do this to John. To his baby.

"Bastards" Alex murmured to himself. He looked back down to John and ruffled his curls. John didn't deserve this.

Because of this shit that was why John was a mess. It was the reason why his arms were butchered and his confidence was terrible. But Alex clicked on the page anyway, reluctantly and there were over 100 people who had joined. It was horrible, Alex felt so pissed off and he clenched his fists.

There was a picture of John, it looked like his yearbook photo and his face was scribbled out. Someone had wrote "GET LAURENS OUT" across where his eyes should have been. Alex notices that the group was active around five years back, there wasn't anything else posted recently. That meant this was probably when John had left school and taken up homeschooling instead. It was awful.

Alex shakes his head as he looked through the comments.

It was nothing but people making shit up.

Anna Thomas: *I hate how this guy talks so much fucking shit! We had to stay two hours after school - the entire class because we got accused of bullying John! He is the one who is doing the bullying though!*

Alex made a 'tch' at the comment.

David Hopkins: @Anna Thomas *I know what you mean! He parades around the school acting like he's the big man. Him and that fucking Lee kid. But we all know John is the ring leader. Last week me, Joel and Kim saw John beating that Sam kid's ass again behind the bleachers! I don't know why Sam puts up with John...*

Anna Thomas: @David Hopkins *I hear Sam and John are fucking... maybe that's why.*

Alex found his throat went dry.
Martha Manning: Me and John used to be friends @David Hopkins @Anna Thomas and he has dicked Sam before today, sooooo many times. We fell out because my art work got selected for Charleston art gallery's teen prize award. John got jealous. When we were walking down the stairs from art, he tried to trip me up and I almost fucking fell over the bannister... he's nuts.

Alex shakes his head and he frowns. These kids - they were fucking scum. They didn't know John!

Alexis Dade: @Martha Manning HOLY FUCK!!! :O Omg John

David Hopkins: I'm so sick of him fucking pretending to be the victim... we're the victims!

Joshua Green: It'd be better if he just killed himself tbh

David Hopkins: Agreed

Alexis Dade: Yep he shud @Joshua Green

Martha Manning: @Joshua Green lol yeah

Anna Thomas: I hope he hangs himself tonite! He puts us thru so much HELL >:l

That was it.

No more.

They were little fucking savages.

Alex couldn't read anymore. Not another comment, he didn't want to do anymore writing, nothing.
He clicks off the tab, saves the document he's working on, shuts off the whole fucking laptop and he put it aside. After that Alex just lies there and he's staring at the ceiling. Panting, the whole thing had gotten him so enraged.

John squirms in his sleep and he tightens his hold on Alex's shirt. At this Alex is rummaging a hand through John's pretty curls. He watches him as he sleeps. People were so cruel sometimes. Alex couldn't bare even reading those and he wonders if John knew. Sure, of course he did.

They were bullying him. It was them against him - one person. That wasn't fair.

Then that comment about John fucking some other guy, that was bullshit. Alex pushes the thought aside, he didn't want to think of that nastiness. That weedy little prick with his John. Nope. Even so, whoever John had fucked before now, he was his and John was his own. Comments couldn't rip them apart, nothing could.

John was pure, innocent. He was the innocent in all of this mess - not them!

God, Alex was fuming. Absolutely seething and he was restraining himself from launching something across the room. But he held it together, not wanting to disturb John. For the past few nights John had been struggling to sleep, tonight he had fallen asleep without issue. Alex sighed when looking at him. He couldn't believe they would do that to him. Write all those horrific things, lies. All lies.

First thing tomorrow Alex was booking and buying those tickets to New York.

Alex had to get John away from here, from this hell.

It was going to be the start of something new and no silly hate pages or comments were going to stop him either.

Chapter End Notes

HAPPY HALLOWEEN GUYS!

Okay, so this chapter was a lot shorter. The shortest I've ever done but I want the next one to be longer and it will be where they're in New York and Christmas happens. Yay!

But yeah... we're getting a bit more of a glimpse into John's past. I can't say it gets better either. But... y'all gotta wait and see.

Thank you so much for the comments and kudos! They're amazing - means a lot! You guys are the best <3

X
Alex went ahead and booked their plane tickets to New York the very next day.

John had been with him over his shoulder, sipping his coffee as Alex got the flights up there at the kitchen table. John pointed to various ones, told Alex they should just up their game and go business class. Alex had looked at John like he'd lost the plot since it was a two hour flight. Two hours.

But John shrugged his shoulders and said he'd pay for it. So it wasn't a problem and he laughed about it. Still though, business class for a two hour flight. Alex didn't even argue at this point and just booked it. They really were from different planets.

They went into town after booking their flight and Alex recommended they go grab breakfast out at their favourite pancake place. John happily agreed and so off they went. Hand in hand down the long pathway surrounded by the bare trees, cold winter air until they arrived into the town. Alex noticed how John never let go of his hand, usually he would but not this time.

He smiled at the sight of it still holding his. Even through their gloves Alex could feel John's warmth, his sweet pulsing beat. John must've caught on to Alex because he was beaming back too. Dimples on show and he chuckled softly. Eyes glimmering int he winter sun. It was nice out too because the streets were filled with people laughing along jollily, some carol singers were on the corner outside a restaurant, the lamp posts were decorated and there was a delicious sweet scent lingering about.

The day was going well so far and no one really paid any attention to them. If they did, John and Alex ignored it. They went to the pancake house, Alex decided to try the blueberry pancakes with syrup and a chocolate waffle to please John, with his black coffee. John got a froffy mocha, stack of pancakes and a strawberry sunday.

John didn't mind paying for everything and seemed to be in a high spirits today. Alex was glad. He remembered John telling him how Alex made him feel like a better person. If this was his doing, him helping John and getting him to smile again then he would continue to be with him. Anything, he would do anything for John.

After there they went to a newly opened book shop because Alex demanded that they go. John was up for it since they stored arts and crafts inside. The store was quite busy too, they had all the little sweet christmas decorations up by the window, a little miniature tree displayed. It was very modern looking - like one you would find in New York which surprised Alex. Since most of the book stores here were really old inside and probably hadn't seen a lick of paint since they had opened

Alex found a section that really caught his eye on American history and he stood reading a bit of this particular book. John lingered by his side, he knew how much Alex loved to have a snippet before either buying the book or putting it back. This time John tells Alex that he's just going to look at the art books, Alex gives a curt nod, he is sort of listening and John obviously not happy he's being ignored, he shoves at Alex's shoulder.

Looking up at John, clearly agitated, Alex said "okay" and John swans off to wherever the art
section is. After a good ten minutes of reading Alex notices John isn't back yet. The store is filling up, children with their parents looking at colourful cartooned books, a couple looking at some together on the stands, some of the staff walking walking around dressed like elves or fairies. It was adorable. Such a great atmosphere.

Alex notices a little boy with his father looking through this big cartoon book together. The kid only looked around three or four, he's clapping and pointing at the pictures as his dad turned the page. He's crouching down with his son, they're both laughing. Seeing this, it hurt. Alex thinks back to Eliza and their baby. All the what could've been, should've beens and would've beens racing through his mind.

The little boy screeches "Yay! I was right daddy! The tiger was in the barn!" and his father laughed along, he pats his son affectionately on the head. Telling him he did a great job of guessing and how smart he was.

Alex watched the way he looked at his son, nothing not unconditional love blazing in his eyes. The little boy's face was pure glee.

With that Alex removes his gaze, walks on, puts his feelings and any emotions left of his unborn child to rest and goes off to find John.

The store is big and Alex had to ask where the art section was. It was on the second floor down the hall in another room. So Alex goes and eventually he does find it.

When he does, he notices that there were a good handful of people in there. They even had a little crafts station, a few kids were sat by it though and the staff were there dishing out pieces of paper for the little kids to colour on. Probably while their parents shopped.

Alex wanders around and he finds John, he's in one isle and as Alex was just about to shout out his name. He noticed John was talking to someone.

While it sounds sad, it's not often Alex ever sees John talk to anyone else but him or a waiter when they were out eating or drinking. But John was having a full blown conversation with whoever this guy was. Alex squinted and this guy looked familiar. A mop of blonde hair, white, very thin, short. He was in the stores uniform so he worked there. Also he was much shorter than John and himself.

They weren't talking nicely either because Alex could him them bickering.

He couldn't fully hear what they were saying but it resulted with John practically shouting "You and him had it coming! You, you deserved that the fucking most!" and John is about to start walking off, as he does he shouted one more time "I don't regret what I did either!" then he's turning on his heels in Alex's direction.

Once John notices Alex stood behind him, John's face literally goes white and his eyes are like saucers. He hadn't expected him to witness all of that. Then John is frowning and storming over to Alex. The guy is left watching John and he looked over to Alex.

Alex is stood feeling useless. As if he had just walked in on an argument and he didn't know what to really say or do.

"John?" Alex says sounding confused.

His boyfriend rummaged a hand through his curly locks, he looked a mixture of stressed and angry. Alex was sure he was about to loose his shit any minute, after the nice day they had too. It was all going to fall on its ass. Just great.
John walked over to him and he shakes his head. "Baby, what's happened?"

But John refuses to say and he takes Alex's arm, softly tugging at it and he's dropping his gaze from Alex's. "Lets go, please." John said quietly. Alex looked over to the guy who was staring at them both. It began to irk Alex because this guy was gawking at them, it was creeping him out. Alex glared at him but this guy wasn't shifting.

"Alexander, I want to leave. Please, let's go. Please."

He had never seen John this desperate before. He looked hurt and mostly scared. That guy was half the size of John, it was ridiculous. Alex scoffed and turned to the guy staring at them. "Don't tell me you're bothered by that short ass" Alex laughed lightly. Although him trying to make a joke out of it didn't work as John's grip on his arm tightened, he could feel John's nails barely into him. Alex winced.

"I want to leave" John exasperated. The way he says it so firmly, so raw and desperate. He's looking into Alex's eyes and Alex knows he's serious. It's his way or no way. But he looked terrified and Alex hated him like this. So Alex lets out a small "Okay honey" and they start walking away.

Just as they exit the isle this guy catches up to them and he shouts "Laurens". At this John and Alex both turn, Alex sizes this guy up but he ignored Alex's sharp glare.

He's staring at John, his soft features etched in what Alex thought to be a look of hatred. John's expression was mutual. Alex could feel John's hand tighten on him once more.

Alex sees how this guy watched John's hand on him and he smirked a little. Then he looked back up at them and he directs his gaze back to John.

"It never meant anything" He blurted. "I just wanted you to know that"

One of John's eyes twitched and he nodded slowly at this guy.

His face blank and his eyes narrowed a little.

Alex could tell John was seething under this concrete mask he held up. Before anything else happened, Alex guided John out and down the stairs. They left the book store and Alex figured it was time to head back home.

John had managed to calm down on there on way. The long walk had done him good and Alex had filled the silence with mindless chatter. He spoke to John about New York, things they could do, bits of history about the city, his family a.k.a the Washingtons, his friends. John tried to show interest, he really did, although that facade he was using wasn't fooling Alex. Whoever that guy was really got underneath John's skin.

But once they got back home, there inside, in the hallway, the first thing John did was let out a frustrated whimper and shrieking sound. Alex's eyes wide because he had never seen John like this before. All that calmness gone, completely gone. John's lid had blown off and he was clapping the sides of his head and Alex was trying to pry his hands off him.

"Let go!" John shouted. "Get off me!"

Alex didn't listen and tried to control John by his wrists. John was trying to tear out his hair by the looks of it. His face had gone completely red and he was muffled out stressed whimpers. Alex had to hold it together, he was screaming inside, panicking. But he had to be strong for John.
"I'm not going anywhere" Alex hissed. "I'm not John!"

Then with a burst of strength John shoves Alex off and Alex nearly tumbles on the floor. He's staggering backwards as John flees off into what looked like the kitchen.

The first thing Alex did was mutter "Shit" and he's legging it in there after John. He is glad he caught up quickly because John is scavenging through the kitchen drawers, his lips are wavering, his eyes are wild with tears and Alex saw how his hands were shaking. He was having a meltdown right infront of him.

Alex was fast when John found a small knife and he knew exactly what John was about to do. "No!" Alex shouted. He's grabbing John's hand and trying to take it away from him.

"Get the fuck off me!" John cried out. "Leave me the fuck alone!"

Oh hell no.

"Stoppit!" Alex shouted angrily. He's furious. "John, you need to stop. Baby don't do this!"

It hurt him just as much as it hurt John. Seeing John have an episode like this - actually witness it for himself. John was relentless when he was trying to hurt himself. Nothing else matters, no one else matters, not himself or Alex. It pained Alex that John was doing this. But he just had to try.

"John!"

Alex hands John's hand and John was curling over, he's already rolling up his sleeve. Alex is pulling John back swiftly by the hood of his jacket and he's doing his best to get the knife out of John's hand. John is too quick for him though.

"No! Don't -" Alex called frantically.

"Get off me!" John squirmed.

"Stop - no! No!"

But in a moment, what is done is already done. Alex smacks the knife out of John's hand before he can do another blow on himself and the knife bounces on the floor then spirals into the corner.

Immediately Alex takes John's arm, another two deep gashes to match the rest he already has there. John is motionless, his eyes are just lifeless and he's gone completely mute.
"Fuck, fuck, oh god. Why John?!" Alex shrieks at him. John remained unfazed and he kept silent. He was in a world of his own. It worried Alex because he wasn't sure if John was even listening to him or if he was unconscious. "Why would you do this?!"

Alex drags John over to the sink, throws on the tap and puts John's arm under it. John lets out a loud 'ow!' and Alex checks it quickly, it's hot and he mutters "Baby I'm sorry" before turning it the other way for cold water.

John winces at the ice cold water that hurried his blood down the drain. Alex is there by his side, watching and waiting. John sniffled and he's wiping at his eyes using his sleeve. As he does, Alex is staring down at the gashes, god they were a mess.


Alex watches him as this happened before turning off the tap and he's got out a clean cloth from underneath the sink. He pressed it against John's open wounds, got they're horrific. Alex grimaces at them, more to add to the collection.

"Let's pray you won't need stitches... John. Why would you do this?!"

He leans against the kitchen counter with John as he's pressing down more on the wounds. Alex is just thinking about what had happened, it happened so fast. It was all still processing.

John, tantrum, knife, cuts, blood.

Alex shakes his head to himself and blinks back to reality.

What had just happened.

His head was spacey, his hands were numb and his throat was tight.

What Alex had just seen, it couldn't be unseen.

Alex flickered his eyes to John who was still in his trance. Gently, Alex leaned over closer to him and he's moving a lock of hair under John's ear so it's out of his face with his free hand. Then he's wiping any of the dampness still left around John's eyes.

All Alex knew was whatever sent John off it was down to that guy. Whoever he was, Alex wanted to punch him in his sorry face until the fucker was black and blue. This was the outcome he had produced. Whatever he had said to John, Alex was going to find out one way or another.

"John" Alex said in much less a whisper. "I need you to come back to me"

But John never said anything. He didn't even look at Alex, his hazel eyes were lost and John
doesn't even flinch at the pressure Alex put on his arm. They wait for the bleeding to stop and Alex can only chant "It's going to be okay" while he sorts John out.

After they moved out the kitchen, Alex has John on the living room sofa, the first aid kit box out and Alex is sat on the floor while he's nursing John's arm.

He has the white bandaging out and he's spiralling it around John's arm over the gashes. They didn't look too deep, they weren't pretty but they weren't deep enough for a hospital trip.

Alex thought back to the sole reason why he was here in the first place, this job, looking after John. All Alex could think was, this it? Stopping John from killing himself every so often? He didn't know.

John had been fine since earlier today. He hadn't cut once during Alex's stay over the past number of months.

Something had to have triggered John. Alex was aware that John knew him because over the last hour, Alex remembered the guy was off of that picture on John's brother, Henry's Facebook.

The one where John is stood between some guy called Charles Lee and that weedy blonde boy. Alex couldn't remember his name though. It had slipped through his mind but that was where he was from.

Nothing but sheer irritation filled Alex after that.

"John, I think we need to talk." Alex slips out gently.

John was leant back on the sofa looking half and half at the very most. He looked rough, tired and just emotionally exhausted. But he was listening to Alex, his eyes were resting on him. Alex was just finishing pinning the bandage in place and as he did, he kept his hands on it and his thumbs swirled over where the new founded gashes were.

Then John runs a hand down his face and he heaves in a hefty breath before releasing. He sounded scared, his breathing erratic and Alex is eyeing him. He sees how John's adam apple bobs and he looked terrified. "You're breaking up with me, aren't you?" John sniffled. Alex's face was a picture and his eyes sprang wider.

"No! No, no, no -" Alex spluttered sounding shocked.

But John was shaking his head, he wasn't hearing Alex right and he's wiping at his eyes again as more eyes are at the brink of falling. Alex sits up on his knees and shuffled closer to John as he held him.

"You are! Oh god, Alexander." John whispered.

"You shouldn't have had to see that... I shouldn't have done that." Alex is doing his best to calm John down with little shushes and soothing his sore arm.

John hiccuped a sob and he's wiping his cheeks. His hazel eyes have gone red and they're glassy,
Alex feels like he could cry himself. "I'm sorry, I'm really sorry. I'm a fucking idiot."

"John, you had a breakdown" Alex tells him. "And no, don't be ridiculous. Why would I be breaking up with you?"

Alex wanted to tell John he had dealt with much more before today. His mother, Eliza, his unborn child, being passed around to family to family growing up. Alex was hardly going to leave John over this. John gazed back at him looking hopeless.

Then Alex finds his voice again before starting up again, "I'm just glad I was here while you had it because if I wasn't and you were alone, then, I don't know what I would've done." John looks back to him and he bites his bottom lip, chewing it in thought. "What got you so worked up?" Alex asks calmly. He had to keep a steady voice, not push John too much.

Alex wasn't sure what would happen if he tried pressing. He couldn't deal with another meltdown from John.

Finally after what felt like forever John speaks up. The silence breaks.

"I had no idea that he worked there, otherwise I wouldn't have -" John stops and he went silent. He had to catch his breath before speaking again. "We used to go to the same private school, we were close. Maybe, closer than close." Alex made a soft hum, he understood. John sees Alex's face as he does and John snarls at him. "Oh, don't give me that"

Alex frowned at John, he didn't get it. What had he done now. "What?"

"That face you just made" John snaps. Alex shook his head and rolled his eyes, letting go of John's arm and he goes back to sitting crossed legged on the carpet. So they were going back to this - again.

"John, I just made a face. That's all. Calm down." Alex gritted out, he was doing his best to keep so, so patient.

But John was glowering at him, he shifts forward there on the sofa and growls, "Don't give me that, I'm sorry Alexander, Charleston has pretty damn slim pickings when it comes to gay men. What? Am I really that disgusting? Is he that bad?"

Flickering his eyes up at John, Alex squints them and he begins to stand up. "Actually, yes he is."

"Geez, thanks." John scoffed. "Thanks Alexander..."

As Alex staggered up as he got up and he's giving a small stretch, he hisses, "Now you're just overreacting. Stoppit, it's pathetic."

"I'm overreacting?"

"Yes! You are! You're petty - You're unstable!" Alex spits.

He could've swore John wanted to strangle him. His face was twisted. "Fucking petty? Unstable?" John growled. "You're saying I'm unstable now?! Well, I can't help that I'm like this! I'm not perfect, Alexander, I'm not a person who -" Then John stammered out with, "You don't know what it's like! You don't get it!"

Now that only set Alex off even more. He looked at John like he had just been smacked across the face. That was what it felt like anyway.
Then Alex shouted over him "I know that! I don't care if you aren't perfect! You're fucked up, I'm
ducked up! We both have had shit lives! We've had shitty upbringings! I get it alright!" Alex made
a bit of a sarcastic laugh and he throws out his arms.

John's eye twitched at him and he scoffed again. "You cut, I know, I've seen your goddamn arms!
You're sliced up like a virginia fuckin' ham!"

John went back to biting his lip, he wiped at his eyes again. Alex's heart hurt how he had made him
cry but John needed a few home truths. "- And now I've actually caught you, seen you do it! How
do you think that makes me feel? Honestly, baby, I'm terrified! Scared! You could've hit a vein
and bled out. I don't want that. I don't want you to die John." Alex's voice croaked and he sees how
John is slightly moved by hearing it.

"But don't you dare take it the fuck out on me! It isn't my fault you've had a big ol' bust up with
your ex boyfriend!" Alex cried.

Then John quickly throws in "He wasn't my boyfriend! It meant nothing - well to him apparently,
but that isn't the reason why I-I'm like this right now!"

Alex chooses not to even respond to that and continues with his shouting.

"- Not when I'm helping you, when I'm the only one here who is giving a damn! Would I still be
here if I thought you were disgusting?"

John's frown begins to face and it goes back into more of a look of hurt. Alex hated shouting at
John, it was the only way to get through to him though. He hated it when John got mad and spun
things on him, how John made him to be the bad guy when Alex was only helping.

Then Alex takes a deep breath and he puts his hands together, brings them up to his face as he
breathes out there before trying again.

"I think whoever that asshole is - is the worst" Alex mutters.

Then he continues, John winces. "For making you feel so small, so weak, so unbelievably low, so
fucking worthless that you feel the need to do that."

Alex was stood waiting for an answer. John didn't have anything to say, he was pulling down the
sleeves of his hoody over his hands and curling up his legs. He looked sore and angrily into space.

"John, I'm no therapist, I'm not a doctor or fucking specialist, by any means when it comes to
mental health. But as your boyfriend, yes, your damn boyfriend" Alex says, stressing emphasis on
what he was, he had to get this through John's head even if it killed him. "I'm here for you. I don't
think you're disgusting, nor do I give ten shits if you and that guy were dicking back in the day. I
don't care!" Alex said.

He sees John's mouth twist a little. Ever the observer but Alex knew, John was listening. John
always did that when he listened or did when John pretended he wasn't, when Alex usually moaned
at him to pick up his dirty socks or wash his plate.

"For the umpteenth time Alex got back down on his knees and he's taking John's knee-caps,
squeezing them and he hangs his head a little. "I'm not leaving you, never, ever. John, I promise.
You need to try a lot fucking harder, if you want to make me run for the hills."

John continued to ignore him however and Alex, as badly as he wanted to give John some alone
time he did worry if John would try anything again.
Alex sighs and he stands up again, he takes one more look at John who stubbornly sits there, grilling in his own anger and shame. He doesn't know what else to do, so Alex decides to try and trust John. If he cuts again then - he tried.

He knew he shouldn't but Alex found that he couldn't stop himself. Bitterly he hissed out "But you have to know, John. You're not the only one who's ever been hurt."

Then there was silence.

"I'll be in my room" Alex mumbled. He wipes out some of his hair that had fell in his face. "Come on up, if you want to try talking like adults."

And so, with that, Alex left John alone with his thoughts.

It was probably around three hours later that John decided to make an appearance. Alex was wasting time around on the internet there on his bed, writing parts of his book in-between and having a Facebook chat with Washington. He had just tuned in to let his foster father know that he would be arriving back to New York tomorrow evening, with John for two whole weeks.

Washington thought it was not such a good idea and told Alex that he should alert John's mother, Alex told Washington that John was a grown man, he could do whatever he wanted and while Washington did agree, he didn't seem all that positive that it was the right thing to do. Alex ignored him and bid goodbye, told Washington that he would see him tomorrow night or maybe the day after.

Alex was nearly falling asleep there as he was watching a few videos on Youtube, if it wasn't for John creaking the door open softly, he may have just dosed off and he still had packing to do. Well, him and John did.

John peeps in at Alex and Alex looked up from his shoulder to the doorway. He didn't say anything to John and John didn't say anything back either. He crept over to Alex, his socked feet padding on the carpet and he's slowly making his way to Alex's side.

Although the room was dark, with only the laptop baring them any source of light, Alex could see how John shamefully hung his head and his hair was down now. He looked like a kicked puppy. Half of it in John's face and Alex's brow furrowed, John looked like he may have been crying for god knows how long. His eyes and cheeks are all botched with redness. Alex could see clawed marks down John's freckled cheeks, he looked like he had scratched his face up.

It pained him to see the marks and as much as Alex wanted to wrap his arms around John, tell him it was okay, that he was sorry for screaming at him earlier. This time Alex was going to wait for John to reach out first. So far it felt like all take and no give with John, as much as it hurt, Alex needed to give him a taste of tough love. Let him call out for him and apologise.
So Alex continued to write up parts of his chapter and he ignored John, he felt the bed by his side dent and jilt from John's bodyweight.

Then after five minutes, Alex quietly heard the soft mumbling of "Alexander"

With that Alex acknowledges him but only slightly. He's still half writing and showing a bit of interest. He was still angry himself after all.

"Alexander" John says again, this time louder. Alex doesn't even budge, he's got his eyes glued to his screen and purposely ignoring John. His boyfriend was going to have to learn the hard way. Alex wasn't a soft touch anymore. He was sick of John's shit.

He frowned to himself and Alex could see John staring at him int he corner of his eye. He looked glum and miserable but it was just too bad. John had to learn, when Alex was reaching out to him, time after time that John couldn't keep shoving him away.

Then he felt the presence of John's head on his shoulder and Alex closes his eyes, then he sighs. Here they go again.

Would it be another breakdown.

Another argument.

Alex wondered which it would be.

"I'm sorry" John said in a muffle.

He felt John's arms slide around his mid-section and he's clinging on to Alex there behind him on the bed. Both of them lay together there in the darkness.

But Alex say nothing and went on ignoring John. They didn't say anything to each other after that for the rest of the evening, that was until Alex shifted his laptop aside and he's patting John on the leg, John was quietly snoring and it turned into more of a gasp when Alex did that. Immediately waking John up from his nap and he's shifting off the bed, sheets left in a crumpled mess.

John is gradually shifting from his side to his back and looking at Alex through sleepy eyes. He looked better now, his tears were dried up and John's face wasn't red anymore.

Alex still speak to John even when he was stripping off his top and basically signalling that it was time for a wash. John did the same, he's sloppily pulling over his hoody and then his top.

Alex is already walking off into the ensuite and he's running a bath. He wasn't a bath fan but Alex figured it was what John needed.

He ignored the horrible holes in the wall, they always grossed him out and it was probably why he bathed in John's bathroom more than his own. But Alex was too focussed on his feelings and how he was going to deal with John for the reminder of the night.

Once the bath was more than half full Alex was slipping off his jeans, boxers and clambered into the water. It wasn't too hot, just right. He could hear John follow suite, his footsteps from behind. He hears John's flyer zip down and the rustling of his jeans dropping to the floor.

As Alex was slipping out his hair tie, allowing his dark locks to pool at his shoulders, he gave his hair a good scratch and tipped his head forwards to get it all wet. Alex was batting his eyes with his fingers from the water and he could see John each time he blinked climb into the tub. These were
great deep tubs, luckily enough so there was plenty of room. Alex on one side and John on the
other, facing him where the taps were.

Alex swished his hair with the water and stared at whatever John was doing. John who didn't have
anything to say, he did the same, threw handfuls of water over his own and Alex's heart melted at
the sight of his curls glistening, the way they always would shrink up into doll-like ringlets so
beautifully.

While John was doing that, Alex lay back and just simply stared at him. His face duller than it ever
usually was and his big dark eyes were half-lidded. John catches on to his staring, he's careful not
to dip his bandaged arm in the water and instead keeps it hanging over the edge of the tub.

"Where do we go from here?" John asked quietly.

Alex could tell that John was expecting him to come out with an endless bulk of advice, shower
him with love and to coddle him like he usually would. Not this time.

But Alex answers him anyway, he shrugs and says, "You tell me"

John drew up his knees there to his chest and locked his arms around them before resting his chin
on his knee caps. He drops his gaze to the rippled water around them and sighs.

"We're leaving for New York tomorrow" John sniffled. "You'll still let me come though, right?"
Then he's glancing back up at Alex.

Alex clears his throat before answering, "I want you to -" He tells John. "I really do, but I can't
have you, John, flipping out at me every five minutes and then running to grab the nearest sharp
object you can find." John's brow knit and he's burying his face in his knees. "It isn't right!"

"I understand that it isn't easy for you, to break out of this addiction. But you need to stop these
outbursts, towards me, it makes me feel that I'm not - I'm not doing enough. Like I can't help and
all I want to do is help." John nods there in front of him but he doesn't look up to reveal his face.

Alex hitched his head up further and stared at the old ceiling. God even the tiles above them were
all cracked. "That's why I've had a good think about it all." Alex said. "You can come with me
tomorrow, sure. But if you are really hellbent on coming to New York to study and live with me,
then you're getting help. Professional help, John and I mean it."

At this John's head springs up and his face is a look of shock. "What?"

"Counselling, John, you're going to get counselling." says Alex. At his words John looked
panicked. "You need it, your parents never helped you, so I will."

John roamed a hand through his hair and gripped at it tightly. He scrunched up his eyes and took a
deep breath. "I'm already taking anti-depressants" He squeaked out. "Isn't that enough?"

Then Alex sits up properly. "They're obviously not working, so no, fuck - no I don't care! It isn't
good enough. You need help." He groans.

With a nod, John lets go of his hair and swivels his face with water. "Fine, okay. Fine. I'll do it."
John tells him, he didn't sound pleased at all though. "I'll do what you want." And John is
mooching forward, his voice breaking as he does. "I'll do it!" He sobs.

Alex knows deep down his shouldn't but his pride shatters and he mutters "Oh fuck it" to himself.
He's dragging John in, wrapping his arms around him. John is clinging his around Alex's neck and
crying into his neck. Alex draped a hand in John's hair and he's soothing his curly scalp, his other hand rubbing up and down John's back.

But after a few minutes Alex pulled down away, gently, he's taking his cheeks and wiping new hot tears away. Then they're staring into each others eyes, John sniffled and he's chewing his lip before leaning in once more and capturing Alex's lips.

John was kissing him hungrily, savagely and Alex complied. As their tongues mingled, teeth bumped, John occasionally nipping Alex's bottom lip, he noticed that John's legs were on either sides of his hips. He could feel John's cock brushing against his stomach and ass just grazing his groin.

After the day they have had, Alex thought to hell with it. He's snatching John's cheeks and clawing them. It had been so long since he'd fucked. The last person had been some woman right after Eliza, an old friend and it had been nothing more than just a quickie at her apartment after a few drinks downtown. Just something to heal the pain of his shattered heart.

A quickie on her sofa, a drizzled used condom tossed on top of the used sanitary towels in her bathroom garbage bin and out of the back door when she had fell asleep.

However this was something else. John, lord, he needed John. This gorgeous, beautifully broken freckled-faced lost soul. He knew he was such a sucker for the damaged, the helplessness in some people. Alex thought back to when he first got with Eliza, they had started off as friends, best friends even and eventually flirted.

But that time he had seen Eliza, crying outside a club when they were younger, mascara down her cheeks after some dickhead had tried to force himself on her. It resulted in Alex getting himself into a brawl but he remembered how she looked. So weak, broken. How she felt as if she wasn't good enough and that people just wanted to use her.

Helpless.

Alex wanted to connect with him, physically, emotionally. Prove to John just how much he cared for him, loved him even. That's what it was at this point. He loved him.

"Not here" John muffled out, he could feel Alex parting his cheeks open. "Legs ache, too cramped"

Then Alex is pulling himself up on the side of the tub and quickly climbing out, he helps John up and out too, John staggered out since his legs had turned to jelly but Alex catches him, supports him and they're kissing before stumbling out back into the bedroom.

Both of them completely soaking still and the dry sheets go ignored when John is throwing, both himself and Alex on the bed. They bounce and snort into a pit of laughter when Alex almost falls off the edge.

As Alex collected himself panting and he's got up on his knees, shuffling to the headboard and is sure to quickly shove his laptop on the stand before anything else happens. John crawls over to him and he's gone back to kissing Alex, straddling him and grinding down on Alex's crotch roughly. Alex is hardening, his cock still a bit limp from the water but it's growing harder by the second.

He's got John by the hair and massaging his scalp still. John is muffling out a "Oh fuck" when he's
trying to position himself, he's looking down and seemed quite unsure of what was to happen next. Alex stops kissing him and he's examining John for a moment.

"Jack" Alex calls. John looked to him with flustered cheeks. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah" John said back. "Uh, I'm just, um -"

Alex chuckled, his boyfriend looked adorable right now. "You sure you wanna ride me?" Alex asked. John nodded, he played it off trying to look cool. Then Alex's next question made his own cock twitch. "I gotta ask, on a serious note, have you done this before?"

At this John cocks his head to the side, his eyes go half-lidded as he's studying Alex and he pulls a blank but yet irritated face at him. Alex snickered and he tugs a strand of John's hair before tucking it behind John's ear. It was cute how they stuck out like that.

"What!" Alex chuckled. "I have to ask! I don't want you... freaking out or regretting it."

"Why would I freak out? I've been wanting you to fuck me since we first got together!" Alex had to laugh aloud at that one. John had been gagging for it for ages now. He knew that was true.

"Really Alexander" John rumbled and he's grinning. "You're really assuming that I'm a fucking virgin, christ."

"You could be" Alex shrugged. "I mean you were homeschooled?"

John's expression is blank. Alex couldn't read his expression and John's smile had faded. "Doesn't mean a thing" John mumbled.

Alex hummed. So John had his own secrets by the sounds of things. Alex wasn't going to pry, instead he goes back to kissing his boyfriend and they're rocking against each other.

As this happened Alex used one of his now spit-ridden fingers to pry John open, then he continued to tease him until John was all but whimpering. Alex waited for John to adjust, before he began sliding his finger in and out, pulling down as he did this occasionally to stretch him.

"You don't do this much, do you? From this end, I mean, 'cause, god, you're fucking tight." Alex laughed breathily. John mewled louder, shamelessly filling the room with his moans.

John growled under the electric sensations this elicited. His cock was leaking steadily now. "Shut up, it's been ages since I've... Hurry up and fuck me," he ordered.

"Hold on there, baby," Alex shot back, enjoying the other's sensual torment, "Tell me when I've got it." He's still slicking his fingers in and out of John. That delicious slap of salvia in his ass, it both sent them wild.

"When you've got what?" John rasped with impatience. Then Alex brushed over that special spot and a white wave of pleasure stole John with a wave of sensation that crashed over him.

"Fuck!"

John hears a low chuckle. His lean sides heaved as Alex continued to stroke him. "Alexander! Just fuck me!" After just a few moments of this, John all but begged, "Oh my god, fuck, fuck" John sobbed.

The finger left him almost as soon as John said this and the empty feeling threatened to swallow
John again. John grunted as something much thicker than a finger immediately nudged his entrance.

He bit his bottom lip and tried not to cry out as Alex's cock pressed against him and began to push inside. John closed his eyes; moisture gathered in their corners. He found himself wishing all his tears came so easily. It had been so long for him.

John dropped his head lower, fighting to hold back his groans at the stretch and burn of his entrance. Despite the fact Alex was easing himself in slowly, John felt his dick drop slightly as the pain and the pressure threatened his arousal. He opened his eyes and saw Alex confidently gazing back up at him. He smiled lovingly.

Alex had been mesmerized by the sight of himself sliding into John's gorgeous spread ass, but he was brought out of this as he felt John on top of hi suddenly tense. So he leaned up and kisses John softly. "I've got you" Alex whispered against his lips. "M'here baby and I'm going nowhere."

At that John's eyes glimmered and Alex could hear his breath hitch. "Alexander..." John murmured and he's wrapping his arms around Alex's neck again, hugging him as he began to slowly sink down on top of Alex's cock. The burn was there because John let out a pained wince, Alex stopped guiding him down for a moment by his hips and waited for John to relax, settle, before trying again.

The girth was more than enough to get John squealing a soft moan, Alex's length sent John into a frenzy, especially when he began to move. Growls and grunts, gasps and moans ricocheted off the walls of the room. The creaking of the headboard, the pair of their hushed voices joined in a primitive duet, just as their bodies were now connected.

The slap of flesh added a percussive element as Alex set out at a purposeful pace using slow shallow strokes at first, allowing John to continue adjusting.

"I thought you were going to fuck me, not spend the evening waltzing with me," John pantingly chided.

Infront of him, Alex eyes narrowed. He had been trying to be relatively gentle, having been with enough men who were not. But if that was how John wanted him to play it, he was only too happy to oblige.

John was about to issue another jibe, but his words were cut off with a barking cry as Alex suddenly slammed up into him so hard it threatened to steal his breath. John felt Alex grasp his hips in a vise like embrace, as Alex drew upwards more, only to plunge into John again even more deeply, if that was even possible.

At this John felt his heart immediately accelerate, beads of sweat jumped to the surface of his skin, and a shaking shiver coursed up his back as his body absorbed these erotic blows.

"Is this what you wanted?"

On top of him John's curly head nodded, but this was not enough. "Say it!" Alex demanded, his frustration spilling over into his voice.

"Y… y…yes!" John gasped at last, as Alex continued to pound into him. In this moment all the bad shit from earlier had gone, his dark thoughts were banished, there was no heartache or regret, the only thing John was conscious of was the hard rock of pleasure, the heated collision of flesh.

Despite the pain, the thrill of being so conquered resurrected John's waning erection. Beside this,
each thrust of the thick cock inside him now grazed against that internal place of pleasure. Beneath the pulse of Alex's motions, John groaned deep in his chest as the tingle that had started in his balls frothed up. His low belly tensed as he was pushed past the point of no return.

John knew he was on the verge of coming and no hand had touched him. It was as if on queue Alex grabbed his erection and was jilting it. John takes it too, their fingers interwinding, one arm still wrapped around Alex's neck as he muffled a cry into him. John continued to bob himself up and down there on Alex's cock. Alex's hefty breaths were ragged and he breathed out "Holy shit".

It didn't take long after for John's seed to splutter all over them, he was a heavy cummer and it soaked them. It went ignored though, as every nerve tingling, in the after-burn of this powerful release, John let out another heavy moan and he squealed when Alex jetted up on his knees, he pushes John backwards and Alex is slipping his cock back in quickly.

He's got John on his back and Alex had gone back to thrusting inside of him. John and Alex don't break eye contact a single time, he wraps his legs around Alex's waist, pushing Alex in further as he's plunging into him. Alex's balls hitting the base of John's asshole, furiously and he's leaning down, all his body weight on his arms as he's hunched over John.

"So damn tight" Alex huffed, then he laughed breathlessly again and John does too. "Baby, you're amazing - tight - fucking gorgeous"

His pace speeds up again as Alex bares his cock viciously inside John, he's beating up his prostate and John is sobbing out aloud. His head is drawing backwards, his eyes closed and he's got handfuls of the sheets. "There - fucking - there! Right here - harder!" He cried.

Alex practically drills at that particular spot, his own balls are starting to brew and ache themselves. He knew it wouldn't be long until he's spluttering right there inside John. Claiming him as his very own.

Before that though, Alex pants out "Pass me your arm" and John frowns at him, his expressions change through the pulsing pleasure rippling through him. When John offers Alex his arm, Alex shakes his head and gestured to the bandaged one. John looked wary at first but he lifted it up to Alex and Alex takes it, he's doing his best to balance himself on his free arm before gripping John's.

John's eyes go like golf balls when he sees Alex press the bandaged part of his arm to his lips, he's continuing his thrusting and John is getting out another moan. His prostate was on fire and he wasn't sure how long he could keep his tears at bay. Both from pleasure and the fact that Alex was there, on top of him, kissing his wounds.

Alex trails them up and down, but mostly pressed soft kissed on the center where his new cuts were. John goes to gritting his teeth when Alex really set in and eventually he reaches his climax.

Crying out loud and Alex never once broke his series of kissing, he's clutching John's arm tighter and at that moment, John feels an eruption of hotness there in his ass. He can feel it dribble out too, Alex's cum slowly melting out of him.

He finally stops his thrusts and Alex pants aloud, John does too, they both look back at each other. "+lexander" John murmured.

They're red in the face, then they giggle and Alex places one last kiss on John's arm before letting it go so he can take John's cheeks. His thumbs circling them and John's crying again. Alex leans down and pops one last kiss on his mouth.
"We'll be okay, won't we?" John asked softly. His hazel eyes full of emotion and tears still. They're hypnotising.

Alex rolled his own eyes and stifles a small chuckle. "Jack, you already know the answer to that." He sighed. "We will be fine. Fresh start tomorrow, okay?"

John leaned up quickly, pressed another kiss to Alex's mouth, well half of it caught his nose and he flopped back down. Alex snorts as he does, John was left grinning at Alex and whispered "Okay"

Then after another heavy round of fucking, both Alex and John got only five hours sleep before the alarm went off. Even though they were due up a couple of hours after, mostly to pack their things but their flight wasn't until late afternoon.

Alex reset his phone and glanced back down at John there sleeping peacefully next to him at his side. He smiled and went back to sleep. An extra hour or so wouldn't hurt.

After all they needed their rest. Still though, Alex couldn't wait to show and spend the next two weeks with John in New York.

They had a very busy time ahead of them.

Chapter End Notes

*Fist pump* And another chapter is up! Yes! I wasn't sure I would get it done this weekend at all. But I did - yay!

Okay so, they've finally done the do! Gosh. I wanted them to finally just do it? I mean it's just sex but kinda not just sex? Since it's their first time doing it. I've tried to make it a little bit romantic thus angry since they're still pissy with each other. But more sex is gonna happen soon anyway...

Oh god and John - him and his breakdowns. Alex just cannot anymore, so he's gonna get his baby some help!

Next chapter: New Yorkkkkkkk! (God help us all lmao)

Also thank you so much for the lovely comments and kudos! Im so glad! You are all the best, besets supports! Yay! You guys keep me going, you really do even when my fingers go numb and feel like they're gonna fall off :'

Also! I am thinking of making a tumblr so that if anyone wants to talk about story ideas and such then we can chat about them properly on there! Let me know please! :)

<3 X

PS. I listened to Lana Del Rey's song "Noir" over on YT when I wrote part of this, it's a bit of a psychotic song and suits John to a treat in this story. I recommend you check it out! ;p

or Melanie Martinez's "Teddy Bear" would go nicely ;)
The next morning was such a rush.

Alex was waking John up who stirred and asked Alex why he was racing around the room. Alex reminded him that they had to get ready and pack for New York. John complained he was hungry and wanted food first but Alex was having none of it.

After yesterday, Alex was still a little short with him and so John went ahead, did as he was told. Then moaned about how his ass was sore still.

After a quick shower together they started their packing. But even though Alex had a case, he didn't bother with it. He grabbed the duffle bag he brought with him, tossed in a few things, since he was going home there wasn't any point taking everything, when he was coming back in two weeks anyway.

John packed up his rucksack with some spare clothes but Alex said he could always borrow his stuff, so he needn't worry about toiletries apart from a toothbrush and John's hair stuff. Alex also reminded John to bring his phone with him just incase.

Their flight was due in the afternoon and it was already late morning. There wasn't really anything else left to do, all the fairy lights were off, the place was tidy so that they didn't have to clean as soon as they got back.

Alex promised John that they could grab breakfast at the airport. After locking up the house, Alex had already booked a taxi to pick them up.

They waited outside the front for it, it really was getting colder. John looked adorable there with his long knit scarf wrapped around him.

Alex demanded John wrap up warm because New York was going to be colder, he had already checked the weather back home and it was already snowing. John's eyes had lit up at the mention of snow. Alex grinned and now he really couldn't wait to get back. Just so he could pelt John with a few snow balls. But mostly see that look in his face again, that innocence and happiness.

Their taxi came not too long after and in they went on either side at the back. Alex instructed that they were to be taken to Charleston International Airport and away they went. John was staring out the window as they rode off and Alex watched as he did, John looked at peace and it calmed Alex in some way.

He dropped his eyes down to John's arm where his wounds were still bandaged up, Alex had put a fresh one on that morning for him. Alex takes John's arm and he's drifting a thumb over it even though John probably couldn't feel it for wearing his jacket. Alex still wanted to show some type of affection.

John looked back to him and smiled softly before looking out the window once more. All the bare trees flying past them as they're zooming down the long path way they usually walked down when they were heading into town.

Alex joked "I bet you feel like you've been kidnapped" while John just rolled his eyes and grinned
to himself.

When they got to the airport John looked slightly overwhelmed and told Alex it had been so long since he'd been here. Alex tells him not to worry, they check in and after security control they're grabbing sandwiches and a coffee together.

Once they'd had a few toilet breaks, a wander around looking at the planes together talking, it was already time to board. The line was longer than Alex had expected, many people must be going to New York for Christmas. John didn't know much better since he'd never been, Alex kept looking over at his boyfriend to make sure John was doing alright. He seemed fine for now.

Business class was nice, there was more leg room, no annoying screaming kids, actual room to sleep. It was great. John looked over at him smugly and said "Told you so" when Alex was fussing with how awesome business class seats were.

Alex leans over to pop a kiss on John's lips and as they break apart John catches an older man staring at them both, infront, as if they were zoo animals. Alex and John both look to each other, so then John looks back at the old man and gives him a cheeky wink. Immediately he turns back around from them, leaving both Alex and John spluttering in laughter.

John was a bit jittery when the plane took off though and Alex held his hand. Their fingers worming around one another's and Alex gave John a quick squeeze just for good measure.

Alex decided not to bother with his laptop, instead he managed to get some shut eye while John stayed up to sketch as he listened to the movie that was playing. The flight was quick and in the end it was Alex who was waking John up. They had almost arrived there in New York but Alex wanted to wake John up so he could see the sight of his city.

When John finally stirred, Alex is the one next to the window and he's pointing to the landscape in their view. John's face automatically went from sleepy to delight. Despite the mist and grey sky from the snow, the evening sun blared on the ocean and directed in their way through the lidded small window.

New York was beautiful.

Once they landed they're gathering themselves together, collecting their bags and coats before heading off the plane right into JFK airport. John was following Alex since he had no clue what was happening next. From here on Alex was his life line in this crazy, busy city.

Alex looked back to John beaming, the corners of his eyes winking as he did and pulled along on John's hand. John looked down at their connect hands, he tightened his grip as he looked around him. No one was staring, countless people rushing past them through the airport there.

There were no funny looks, no whispers or threatening glances. John held on tighter and sped up walking so he was by Alex's side rather than behind him.

John was doing fairly well among the crowds, he was holding it together, Alex kept sneaking glances at him to be certain. He couldn't put up with another traumatic breakdown today or right now. So far, so good.

They left the airport and grabbed yet another taxi right outside. By now it was almost five in the evening, the sky already tinting with darkness over its milky pink and yellow sky. John was amazed by his surroundings, it was so different compared to where he was from and Alex found it adorable.
John hadn't seen anything yet and when they drove further into the city, the buildings finally coming into view, all the skyscrapers touching the sky and countless amounts of cars, the horrendous traffic and seas of people. Christmas decorations lining each corner of the streets and subways being rammed with person, after person. It was a new world.

But John's little sightseeing tour ended when the taxi stopped on the curb of a street. Alex is whipping out his phone for Apple Pay and John looked amazed when he saw him just scan it on the reader. Alex chuckled at his expression and nudged for John to get out the car as he was putting his phone away.

"Come on, out you get" Alex laughs.

John is slinging his bag over his shoulder and looking up around at the tall buildings around them in curiosity. Alex is shimmying out the taxi, taking his bag off John and slamming the door. When he turns to look at John, a small smile remains on Alex's lips and he's dreamily staring at his younger boyfriend just gazing around.

"You ready?" Alex asks him.

With a nod, John turns to Alex and Alex pulls him along inside the complex. It never changed, his complex was still as run down and as mundane as ever. Alex was so glad that the elevator worked this time, he wanted some kind of first impression of this dump to be positive for John. But Alex couldn't really hide it, his complex and apartment weren't anything spectacular. John was just going to have to deal with it.

But John wasn't bothered. He's still looking around and just to be a dick, he pushes a random three floors before Alex could even push the button. None of the floors John pushed were his floor.

"Why would you do that?" Alex sighed and he's giving John a weary look.

John smirks at him and leans closer to him as the doors shut. He presses a sweet and soft kiss on Alex's lips. John pulls away and whispered "Wanted more time to kiss" then he leant in again for one more kiss, then another as Alex was laughing into the kisses.

"John!" Alex snorted. He bats his hand on John's shoulder trying to peel him off. "Baby, we've got all the time in the world for that!" And Alex is reaching over as John is kissing his neck to press for his floor. "Just wait until we get inside my apartment"

"I don't want to" John whined and he pouts cutely at Alex. Then he's leaning back in, resting his chin on Alex's shoulder and smirking up at him. Alex always loved John's smirk, it was so sexy. Complimented by his curls hovering over his shoulders from his loose pony-tail. "After last night... I don't think I can wait."

Alex nips John on the end of his nose and John squeaks from it. "Too bad" The elevator pings once they're on the fifth floor, they're laughing as they're spilling out the elevator and John follows Alex. "C'mon this is our floor".

The same old complex, the same old dull dark hallway, nothing changed. The only thing that looked different was the foyer plastic flowers had been changed right outside the elevator and someone else new must've moved in opposite Alex. He noticed the pretty pink wreath on the door and Alex knew an old man used to live there.

Never in the years Alex had lived there had that old bastard put a wreath on his door at Christmas. Alex guesses he must've snuffed it.
He's fetching out the keys from his jacket once they're by his door and slotting them in, John behind him gives Alex a poke gesturing him to probably hurry up, Alex is turning the handle and pushing the door open. Just to be polite, Alex lets John go in first and he enters after him.

Alex can smell a difference and he knows for a fact his foster father has been checking up on his place. It smelt like bleach and lemons so he may have gave the place a quick clean just to brighten the place up. John is immediately making himself a home as he just walks straight into the living room, he's dumping his bag down on the sofa and looking around.

Although Alex really didn't have much to show for his apartment, it was brick walls, a few nice but cheap canvases hanging up on them, his old sofa and second hand coffee table with his rug underneath it - it was geometrical and a great bargain off Ebay.

A few old bookshelves scattered with countless amounts of books including his own ones. A small flatscreen tv on its stand and small office desk in the corner. Alex kept a basic lifestyle really. He wasn't ashamed of it but having John here with him made him think otherwise. His boyfriend came from such a different background, it had Alex wondering what John was thinking when he was wandering around aimlessly.

Alex is dumping his keys in their pot by the side of the front door and he's stripping off his jacket. John is still walking around, he's mostly eyeing the canvases. They were only cheap landscape ones from Target. Alex slowly comes up behind John with a light smile and he's wrapping his arms around his waist.

"You doing okay?" Alex asks.

John nods and he's turning so he can hug Alex back. "Mm" He lets out. "It's nice, to be here. With you, in your own place. I like it." John says softly.

As Alex pulls away he's beaming at John. Then he's unzipping his boyfriend's jacket, John is slipping off his scarf. "Best start making yourself a home" Alex said. "Get comfy, baby. Just throw these anywhere, it's cool." John is taking off his stuff and flings them on the back of the sofa, he pops his hands in his pockets as he follows after Alex who is heading into his kitchen.

"Jesus, pops must've got stuck in real dirty" Alex mutters as he's laughing to himself.

The kitchen was spotless too, so pristine. Taps were shiny, any of the glasses or bowls Alex had out before he left were away. The counter and floor even looked lighter.

It wasn't like Alex was that messy but he did appreciate Washington helping him out, even now, as a grown man. He was always looking out for Alex. Washington would give Alex his last dollar note, even if he were a broke man. That was just how he was. With no children of his own, he thought of Alex as his.

Alex appreciated him so much.

However John was still looking around, eyeing the place up with an unreadable expression.

John looked at Alex with a puzzled face. "Ah, it's my dad. Well, foster dad. Y'know Washington, the guy who works with your mom?"

John opens one of the cupboards then closes it when he realises it's just a pantry. Then he finds the right cupboard, he's getting out one of the cups. "Yeah" John says drearily. He sounded tired.

As Alex is taking out his mug. John snorts when he sees it. Eliza actually got Alex that particular
mug, it had a typewriter on it with "Fuck off, I'm writing" underneath it. Alex rolled his eyes at him as he took it off John, yet he couldn't help but laugh too.

"Yeah, well, he's cleaned my entire apartment, from the looks of it all." Alex said, he's got to flick on the kettle and he opens up his refrigerator. Sighs when he sees there is barely anything in. Alex should've asked Washington to do a quick shop run while he was at it too. John is watching at he does and laughed aloud. Alex turns to him.

"Alexander, you're bad. Don't be so ungrateful." John chuckled. He must've sussed out exactly what Alex had been thinking too.

"I'm not!" cried Alex. "I just don't really feel up to doing a grocery shop, it's busier than ever right now because it's Christmas." Alex sighed. "Fuck, we should've picked something up when we were still out." It was already evening, it was freezing out with snow and Alex just couldn't be bothered to head back out.

John snorts. "Screw it, we can always order something. I've got money. It's on me, alright? No stress." As the kettle is finished brewing, John already knows what Alex will be having. He's gone straight for the coffee pot.

"But my dad could've put something in there! He knew I was coming back with you!" Alex griped. He knew he sounded really whiny but still. He was complaining for the sake of it.

John tossed in some of the coffee into the mug and adds the water. "Maybe it's just as well then..." He says, voice lowering.

Alex arches a brow and he's gone over to John's side. He places a hand on John's lower back giving it a rub. "What do you mean?"

After John adds the hot water, he's turning slightly to Alex and looks him dead in the eyes. "I want to take you out" John says firmly. Alex's eyes widen, he wasn't expecting that. "Not tonight, but I want to do it properly, an actual - y'know. Date. Now that we're here."

Warmth swelled in Alex's stomach and the butterflies adding to it were not helping. An actual date with John Laurens - his boyfriend. His stupid, problematic, gorgeous, smart, funny, lovely boyfriend. Here in New York.

Immediately Alex is nodding and he's pressing a quick kiss on John's freckled cheek. "Can't wait" Alex giggles. John is smirking back and finishing off their drinks.

That evening Alex has practically shown John the ins and outs of the entire complex. Where things were, the rooftop where there was some green house that the older women were putting together for their plants. It was some kind of OAPs club. John of course saw the rest of Alex's apartment, it wasn't that big but he wanted John to feel at home, know where things were.

John wasn't shy either about settling in. After a quick shower together involving lots of steamy kisses. John didn't want to throw on his own pyjamas, no - instead he tossed on one of Alex's old tops and joggers. When John pointed out how baggy it was on his stomach area, Alex didn't miss the way John pulled at it as he looked directly at him. "God - it's like a tent!" John had said laughing.

He was only joking though but Alex couldn't bite away that jab for some reason. He didn't like to admit it, but it hurt.

They had a quick dinner of Dominos, John paid like he said he would, he was all over the moon
with the Dominos app since he never really got to use it back home.

As if the local Dominos in Charleston would deliver to a mansion miles out. But he got them both a pizza each. Alex threw on some trash TV, he sat in front of John as he chowed down on his slices there on the floor. John sat behind him on the sofa, crossed legged, playing with Alex's pony-tail as he polished off his slice of Hawaiian.

Then when finally retiring for the day it wasn't even midnight and the pair of them were exhausted. Alex was sat up next to John now, eyes half-lidded with sleep as he's trying to focus on whatever was on.

John leant on his lap, legs hunched up as he sketched lazily. Alex slowly drifted his eyes down on John, then to the page he was working on. John was sketching Alex - yet again. Alex always knew John loved to draw him. He did it all the time. But he hadn't expected that.

"John" Alex calls softly.

He didn't even turn to Alex, all John released was a soft mumble and Alex asked, "Why are you drawing me naked?"

At this John tilts his head up to look up at Alex upside down. "The question is - why not?"

Alex bit his lip and he's trying to sound like he's concerned, shocked even but his laughing just makes the whole topic fall on its ass. "Oh my god" Alex chuckled. "How often do you look at me?! My god!"

John is smiling along and he's gone back to adding some final touches on Alex's ballsack. "Often" John says softly. "I love drawing you, get over it."

"John" Alex chuckled. At this John is looking back up at Alex with a slight frown, Alex's stomach tenses up as he does. "What?"

"When you laugh you're moving around! Stoppit - you're messing it up" John grumbled.

Then Alex resorts with, "Worried you're gonna mess up my nut-bag? Also, the fuck. Baby, I don't shave. Since when was the last time I've ever shaved my balls?" The drawing was too detailed. But not that detailed it seemed.

"If you stopped laughing and shifting around so much - I might be able to add the hair?" John sighed.

But Alex just wanted to be annoying and have a joke with him. Then he points at the picture, dabbing his semi-greasy-pizza finger on the drawing and goes, "And when have I ever had that amount of chest hair though? Jesus, I'm not a yeti!"

That was when John snapped with, "You're right. Shit - you don't. Oh and look -" John is pointing to Alex's stomach. "Forgot your gut too" Then he snorts meanly.

Alex's smile shortly fades and he goes silent. They were the same size - well John was more lean, more toned with no stomach. John was already aware Alex hated his little roll. He knew he had extra weight on. But to point it out was annoying.

It was as if John could sense Alex's insecurity because seconds later John shifted and sat up. He's looking back at Alex with a regretful look, then John gives him a soft smile and he's putting his hands on Alex's cheeks. "C'mere you" and he's pulling Alex towards him, kissing Alex sweetly.
"You're beautiful Alexander" he tells him quietly.

Instantly Alex's mood picked up.

Sparks flew throughout his body and he felt his face heat up. Alex stares back into John's eyes and John is squinting his eyes, looking at him in a particular way. Alex couldn't keep a straight face and he ends up sniggering. "What is it?!!"

John chews his lip and he says, "I've got an idea and I really want to do it. But, uh, I don't know if you want to." Alex furrowed his brow at him in question.

Usually John was so forward with what he wanted. It felt strange for him to opt away from saying what he wanted or thought. "Tell me" Alex pushed. John's releasing his cheeks, his hands dropping between his crossed legs and he's picking his sketchbook back up again. Then he's darting his eyes to Alex.

"Can I draw you naked?"

Alex batted his eyes at John, then again and again. The silence between them was filled with the noise of the television. John is picking up his pencil, he's still staring at Alex and taps his page as he does. "You want to draw me fucking naked?" Alex snorts aloud. It was funny when he thought about it.

"Yeah, why not?" John is sitting up on his knees now, adjusting himself on the plush pillow behind him. Alex laughed more when he saw John wince, clearly he was still recovering from their night before. John pokes Alex in the leg with his pencil, Alex flinches his leg away from it as he laughed.

"Oh my christ!" Alex cried as he leans back on the arm of the sofa, he's roaming a hand over his face. "First night here and you wanna draw me nude, holy fuck."

At this John pokes him again to get Alex's attention. Alex lets out an 'ow!' and he's staring with his mouth hanging open at John. But John looked clearly serious.

"We're doing nothing else and you want me to draw you with the hair -" John's eyes dropped on Alex's crotch. "Down there" Then he's gone back to staring at Alex in the face. Alex's goofy smile and he's shaking his head as he continued laughing.

"I wasn't being serious! I was fucking around!" Alex cried.

Then John using one hand to tug on the edge of Alex's grey sweats. "Too bad, we're doing it. Either I draw you or I fuck you." Alex's eyes were wild, he's already finding himself harden at John's brashness. John fucking him - that thought was heavenly. It had been a while since he'd taken too. Alex kind of missed it. "All the best artists draw their lovers in the nude"

"Damn, John, where've you been hiding?!" Alex joked.

A glimmer shone in John's eyes in a mixture of lust and dangerousness. Alex saw this and he wanted both. "Come on" John is rubbing at Alex's inner thigh, through his sweats it was sending sparks up and down his body. "It'll be romantic, you've got a boyfriend who's an artist, who wants to appreciate you and your body. Don't you think that's kind of beautiful? Sensual at least?" John says with a small smirk.

Alex flutters his eyes, it kind of was when he thought about it. It was a very intimate thing for them to do. Whatever happened, stayed between them. This was just John showing his love.
"Best part about it, I get to draw you, then keep you all to myself." John giggled.

With a small hefty breath Alex asks, "Where do you want to draw me? Here? My bed?" John shakes his head. He's already clambering off the sofa and slumping down on the rug. He's got his sketchbook and pencil at hand.

John holds a hand up at Alex. "Stay right there" John tells him. He's flipping open a new page. Then he's looking back to Alex, eyeing him and plainly commands, "Strip".

Alex shakes his head as he's beaming away, he's pulling over his t-shirt and subconsciously he's holding in his stomach. What John had said earlier came back into his mind about his belly, he tried ignoring it but Alex continued to stick in, being full really didn't help. John is watching him before he's getting up on his knees, shuffling over to Alex and he's tugging at the ends of Alex's sweats.

"John" Alex scolded as he laughed. "You're so eager!"

"Yeah, well, you're taking your sweet time. I want to see my man pose in the flesh" John chuckled. Alex playfully spanks his hand and he's helping John remove his sweats leaving him in his briefs. John rolled his eyes at them then looked up to Alex. "John, it's fucking cold." The heating was on but it was still freezing.

Then John just laughed and he's assisting Alex with getting them off, taking the briefs at their elastic waist and John is helping Alex peel them off. As he does, reveals Alex's glistening pink cock and balls. John is sliding the briefs off his thighs and away off his ankles.

"That's better" John purred and Alex gives him a playful nudge in his shoulder with his foot. John takes Alex's ankle and pops a little kiss on it. "Right, I want you like this." As he said, John has Alex leaning against the arm of the sofa, one of Alex's legs are arched up while he's lay on his back and the other leg is dangling off the sofa.

Alex looked slightly awkward in terms of his expression, but he relaxed after John gave him a reassuring kisses to his lips and some on his stomach, plus his thighs. Eventually Alex settled properly when John was sat back down and began drawing him.

It took ages. Alex placed his attention to the TV since that was the only thing that kept him sane during this boredom. He felt cold too and had complained about it several times. John kept telling him to be quiet since he was starting to mess Alex's mouth up.

Halfway through Alex was becoming sleepier and sleepier, the coldness no longer biting him, he lay there just watching whatever was on. Trash tv and really bad budget Christmas movies. That was when it came into his mind.

"Hey, Jack, I gotta ask" Alex said quietly, his voice riddled with sleep.

John still appeared wide awake, his hand going at a crazy pace, Alex had no idea how he still had energy. Let alone energy to keep on drawing. But when John got stuck in his work, he kept to it. "What?"

"Since it's Christmas, are your brothers going back to Charleston? I mean, it is the holidays. I'd imagine they miss being at home." Alex says and he smiled at the thought of John with his brothers.

John being happy with his remaining family. Remembering just how protective Henry Laurens was over the horrific bullying page on Facebook and comments, Alex assumed him and John were
close. It was sweet really. "I bet they miss their big brother"

At this John's pencil stilled for a second. He glances up at Alex, however Alex is still watching the television and paid him no attention. So he didn't see the saddened look in John's eyes before he went back to drawing.

"Makes me feel bad" Alex slips out. John narrowed his eyes at his page. "I wanna meet your brothers and sister, Mary. I bet they're as amazing as you."

Then John sighed aloud, shutting Alex up. "I can't work if you keep talking"

"Sorry, I was just wondering that's all. But I'm serious, I haven't stole you away from home, right?"

The silence that set in wasn't too uncomfortable. But John did take a few seconds to give Alex any response at all.

"No, you didn't" John mumbled. "In fact, they never come home. Not on birthdays, not on their mid-breaks, Christmas. Never."

Alex's drifts his attention to John, he was more awake now, this information was surprising. "Why?" Alex said. They were his brothers, Alex didn't understand. Most kids went back home from time to time when they could get out of school.


"But John isn't it kinda -"

"Drop it"

Oh.

Alex notices the pressure John puts on his pencil.

His lines of work roughening, angrily gliding on the page. John's brow knit together and Alex decided it was best he stirred away from that topic. He knew what happened whenever he pushed John. Also his family matters were tender.

So Alex shifts away from all of that. He smiles at John lovingly and says, "You're cute when you're concentrating"

He's glad when John's face relaxes. Alex suspects John and his brothers didn't get along either or maybe he was just sad that they never came home.
As much as Alex wanted to pry, he really had to restrain himself. After John's outburst from yesterday, Alex couldn't deal with another emotional episode.

"Well, you know what" Alex grinned. John looked up at him, a brow arched upwards in question. But Alex knew John was clearly pissed that he hadn't shut up yet. "Screw em! Because, us, you and I John, we're going to have the best fucking Christmas, ever! I've just decided that. It's going to be awesome!"

It must've lighten the mood because John was all dimples and smiles. That was what he wanted then, no mention of his past, his family or life in South Carolina. Just them and a good holiday together. A new beginning on things.

"Alexander" John breathed out, almost dreamily. "You're funny"

Alex cackled out, "Why?! What did I do?!"

John was smiling to himself there as he sketched on. "You, just being you. Never thought, I'd meet someone like you. Never, in a million years."

At that Alex's stomach did a backflip and he's melting inside.

It was almost as if John was trying to tell him something else. Alex felt it, that tingling whenever they looked at each other.

That connection, sparks flying when they held each other.

Where the universe felt like it was going to collapse.

Alex knew the feeling.

He had felt it before after all.

The next morning Alex wakes up in his bed.

His own bed after god knows how many weeks and Alex couldn't say he'd missed it. The same jabbing mattress, nothing like the bouncy plush ones at John's home. Although Alex was glad Washington had gotten his window fixed, no cold seeped through during the night which was good. Alex made a mental note to ring him up later and give Washington his thanks.

Right now, Alex was stirring and wiping the sleep from the corners of his eyes. Then he gave his scruff a good itch, Alex also needed to shave. Jesus, so many things had to be done. That was before he could get around to even working on his book.
John was beside him awake from the looks of it. Alex could hear flickering of pages, he's turning on his stomach to face the other way and John on his other side, he was sat up reading something.

Alex blinked his eyes before he realised that John was looking through an old photo album. Then Alex noticed that there was a pile of his old journals there, including some of his older books and manuscripts lying on his nightstand.

It surprised Alex because he hadn't seen half of that old junk in years. John must've been rooting around some of his drawer and bookshelves. It didn't bother Alex though.

Then John must've noticed Alex's gaze and he's looking down at him there. "You're finally awake" John says as he starts to smile.

Alex gives him a soft 'mm' and he's snuggling over to John's side where he's looking to see what John's doing.

"So you've been nosey, huh?" Alex said, his voice still scratchy.

John looked back down to him with a look of offence and he scoffed out, "As if you weren't nosey enough back at my home!" Alex knew exactly what John was digging at but he ignored it. Then John pokes him on the nose and chants, "What's yours is mine and what's mine is yours"

Alex rolled his eyes and grinned. Then Alex leans up, he puts a hand on John's cheek and kisses him. "Good morning" Alex whispered. John takes a moment to stare at Alex right in his big brown eyes and then he's kissing Alex back.

"Morning" Alex always loved how John's accent slipped through when they would wake up together. New Yorkers were going to have a field day with him alright.

As Alex dropped his gaze he's staring down at his old photo album. It was mostly pictures of the Washingtons, Alex in-between with a few of their family members. Ones from when Alex was really little, some from high school and birthday parties of kids names he could no longer remember. Alex smiled fondly at his memories, partly glad to be sharing them with John.

They flickered through and Alex told John who was who, kids he liked and hated while growing up, old pets he used to have, some where Alex was and school trips. John hummed along and listened to everything Alex had to say.

"You've had quite a life" John had to point out and spluttered out at laugh over some kid from Alex's high school. He was pulling up some other crying kid's underwear, giving him the wedgie of his life. "Tell me you remember that!"

Alex squinted his eyes at where John was pointing. It was behind Alex and an old school friend who were posing for the camera, Alex internally screaming over how greasy and long his hair used to be, dodgy fake snake bites on his bottom lip with checkered arm warmers, posing with a band geek pal of his. "No, I don't think I ever saw that happening" Alex grimaced at the scene behind him. "I don't even remember this, shit."

"Fuck, thats funny" John giggled, as Alex switched his eyes quickly to John, it looked as if John was laughing more over something else. A personal joke perhaps. Alex didn't know.

He swatted John on his thigh underneath the sheets. "Don't be so mean! The kid is getting half his ass torn up there by the linings of his gruds" Alex ended up laughing with him though. "Have some compassion dude!"
John gives Alex such a look.

"Wait, you think that's the worst thing someone could do?" John looked as if he were considering Alex's words, but instead, he rolls his eyes fast and turns back to the album, he flips over to the next page. "That's pretty mediocre in my opinion - in terms of bullying"

Well Alex just turned his nose up at that. "No it isn't! It's wrong, pretty horrible if you ask me."

But John didn't seem to agree, he looked over to Alex with a naughty grin. "Oh, god, you're no fun" John playfully whined. "I was only joking. Besides, it could've been much worse. Beating the shit out of him there behind you, a swirly, maybe even - heh." John paused for a second. "Why do you care anyway? It's an old picture." John finished with a soft snort.

"Yeah but the guy is in tears and everything!" Alex was shocked, it was the first time he'd ever noticed this. "The guy even has a black eye! Fuck, I can't believe I don't remember it."

"Oh, well, whatever"

Alex twists his mouth as he's staring back at John.

He leans back on his headboard. Sometimes John could be so nonchalant about certain topics, it always ceased to amaze Alex. "It's cruel though" Then Alex slipped out with, "You should know, right?"

Shit.

Alex had brought up John's history without even thinking.

But it was as if John never heard that or he chose to ignore it. Then John goes about his business as he's tracing his finger on a picture of an even younger Alex. "Life is cruel -" John said simply with a shrug. "But we move forward though."

Alex remembers this one, he was eight there. His hair in a floppy bowl cut, he had a mouthful of watermelon, big brown eyes squinting as he's smiling, half of the melon red juice drizzling down his chin. He's sat crossed-legged on a hammock on a balcony. A gorgeous sea view in the background, the sun is set in a blood red milky blue sky.

"Aw" John cooed. Alex swatted him again under the sheets, giving John a look of warning when John turned to him, biting his lip and he looks back to the picture. "Look at you! Oh my christ! Alexanderrrrrrrrr!"

"Oh fuck off" Alex laughed jokingly.

He let out a snigger and Alex can feel John squeezing his hand there, resting on his thigh. "You were adorable!" John cried. "Still got your big eyes, even now. Like butter wouldn't melt, huh?"

At that Alex just spat out, "What does that even mean?! My eyes? I can't change these fuckers John!"

"What I mean is, you're still cute. You were a cute kid, Alexander." John tells him softly. Alex's smile turns lighter. He's watching John flicker through more pages. "The Washingtons, they were really good to you. You're lucky."

"Still are" Alex throws in. He really wasn't lying either, Washington was amazing to him. "I
wouldn't trade them in for the world"

Then John slumps is head over his shoulder at Alex and he pouts, "Not even for me?"

Obviously Alex wouldn't, neither of them and he gives John a shove in his side at his cheekiness. John topples over giggling before he's throwing the album on the stand with the other things.

Then he's tackling Alex there beside him, Alex makes some kind of surprised strangled noise and John is on top of him, straddling Alex by the waist all while kissing him.

His strength always caught Alex off guard at times, Alex wasn't weak but John was that bit stronger. He would show it when Alex least expected it. When Alex needed help lifting the Christmas decoration boxes in the basement, John could carry the heaviest ones by himself, carry the heaviest bags when they went food shopping.

Just certain things. Even when John could get rough with him in bed, man handling Alex like it was the easiest thing and Alex wasn't light. He couldn't complain, Alex liked the dominant side of John. It spiced things up between them a-lot.

It tickled when John was peppering kisses on his neck, Alex had a special spot, it always made him weak there. John made sure to take full advantage of it. Gained a good few moans out of Alex as he sucked there and nipped teasingly.

As he's trailing kisses down Alex's neck, John is whispering into his ear, "I really want to fuck you" He says huskily. Alex's heart is pounding in his chest. He can feel his feet and balls prune up at the thought of John ramming into him, right here, right now.

Alex feels one of John's hands skirt his sweats, he's aiming for Alex's growing bulge and manhandled it so sweetly too. "Jack" Alex moaned. John continued to kiss on there at his neck, his hand moving upwards slowly to the hem of Alex's sweats, he's playing with the elastic of them, snapping them against Alex's soft belly. The suspense is murderous.

"Fuck Jack" Alex whimpered, when he felt John putting more pressure on that area there and his hand is dipping into his sweats, talented fingers, teasingly and manipulating Alex's cock with light touches. As always, Alex goes hard and it's starting to bother him. He needed contact. "Christ, if you're going to suck me, then suck my cock. Oh god."

"So needy" chuckled John. "But since, I'm in the mood, fine. I will."

Then John is slinking down Alex and he's not far short ripping the sweats off Alex's legs. Alex kicking them off over the side of the bed, John is taking Alex's hips and he's positioning him. Alex is grabbing his cock, giving it a small pump or two, he's lazily smiling at John who's leaning down now.

Alex knew he shouldn't but John was taking his time. So Alex gets his cock and he's dirtily flopping it on Alex's nose, twice, John looked back at Alex and scoffed.

"Hurry up" Alex orders as he laughed. "It'll have dropped off by time you get on with it -" 

John's eyes became stormy. He's practically snatching Alex's cock and he nips the top of it without the blink of an eye. Alex winces, it felt pretty good in a way. "John! Fuck!"

"Careful, Alexander." John smirks.
"I'll bite it off next time"

Well that did it.

Because oh my god. Alex rasped when John practically engulfed half his cock, deep-throating before flicking his tongue on the tip, teasing and taunting it.

Alex dropped his head back on the pillow, he's closing his eyes, a hand over his stomach and the other tousling John's curly scalp. His curls were out and unruly as ever.

"Jack" Alex moaned.

John traced his nose across the lowest edge of Alex's belly and then slid his mouth down the length of Alex's thick shaft again.

Alex growled deep in his throat and roamed a hand through his hair as he panted. Without anything to come between his sensitive skin and the lush velvet warmth of John's tongue, the sensation of his boyfriend's oral attentions was not new, but it was so godly, indescribably hot.

John grabbed Alex's hips, he's digging his nails into them and slid him down that bit further down, so Alex was dragged in the center of the bed, the sheets all gathered up around him. John clambered off the bed, he's kneeling on the floor at the bottom for comfort.

Alex watched over his heaving belly as John slicked up his two fingers with spit, he's staring at Alex in face and he's gone back to taking cock into his mouth, swirling his agile tongue just barely over its slit.

"Fuck!" gasped Alex as John's shockingly skilled mouth went to work, starting with his sensitive tip. Then John slid his mouth further down Alex's rigid length, at the same time, he slipped one of his long fingers into Alex's ass. After worming this first finger in, Alex was tight. Extremely tight.

John gave a happy little hum. Alex was on the brink of bliss to really pay it much attention.

At this John had to bite at his upper lip but ended up grinning away. Then John began to slowly slide tit in and out of Alex's hungry orifice. "Jack, more, more" Alex chanted. "Jesus christ, it's been so long. Fuck."

"Don't I know it " John giggled. Alex went to give him a little shove in the chest with his foot at that. John grabbed Alex's foot just in time, pressed a kiss on his ankle and places it aside.

"Not my fault" Alex muttered. "Just haven't had much of a chance..."

Since, what, with Eliza and all. Plus the fact that Alex had been fucking girls more than guys since John came along. But Alex wasn't going to kill the mood and tell him that. Although, he guessed John already knew that.

John gives a breathy laugh and says, "Well, you know, with me around now" John is turning his finger around inside Alex, making sure his nail grazes his inner nails and he's reaching around for a particular spot. "You'll have plenty of chances." And he's dipped back down to take Alex in his mouth.
Under John's intimate attentions, Alex's universe collapsed: the only things that existed were finger, ass, mouth, and dick. Then John found Alex's prostate. He stroked this gland in small circles, keeping perfect tempo with his mouth.

Alex's breathing grew increasingly ragged. His hips bucked upwards as he sought relief from the mounting tension building to a fevered pitch in his groin. "Shit, shit, shit -"

John increased the speed of his motions and within moments, Alex's collapsed universe big-banged banged outward with the explosion of his orgasm. The power of it literally filled his vision with stars. "Jack! Oh, fuck!"

Clearly John was enjoying it too. His eyes never left Alex, he continued to watch him wither and cower to his touch.

It was amazing to watch.

This control he had over him.

He too such great pleasure seeing Alex squirm.

This control.

It was amazing.

But Alex loved John's method. It was miles different from his own, John really knew how to work his body. So John stayed where he was, his throat sheathed around Alex's shuddering shaft. He swallowed every salty drop of his Alex's cum, none of it went to waste.

As soon as his heart stopped pounding, Alex reached down and yanked on John's shoulder, coaxing to pull him up and onto him, gathering John in his arms.

But when he reached down to grab John's cock to begin returning the favor; he suddenly felt his hands push his seeking fingers away.

"Nu uh, Alex" John pulled off Alex. Alex's lustful eyes were lidded, he tried to look confused but failed. John's eyes, however, had a strange glint in them.

John leaned back in and he's kissing Alex before saying, "I'll give you a few minutes to rest" he said this with a mischievous grin on his flushed freckled face.

"Then it's my turn."

He knew exactly what John meant and Alex wasn't complaining either.

Despite that it was almost one in the afternoon, it was bas enough they had slept in late. Plus John begged him to death to show him around New York and that half the day.
Their first day, was wasted here in bed. Alex wasn't going to ever say no to John. New York wasn't going anywhere, for now the bustling city, could wait.

It was half five in the evening when Alex and John stumbled out of the complex.

After a good two rounds of full force, headboard banging, raw, loud, and hot, good sex. They had finally managed to get out of bed, both of them complaining they were hungry. John more so than Alex since he was the one who worked up a sweat, having Alex below him like that, taking and doing nothing. John demanded they head out to eat before he died of starvation.

A nice hot shower shared between them and they were dressed. Alex wasn't even sure he could wear jeans, his ass murdered and all of them he owned were tighter than they should be. Plus with his recent weight gain, they were getting tight on his tummy too.

John complained over his hair getting wet and how he hadn't planned on washing it. So he spent a good five or ten minutes under the hair dryer. It was a frizzy mess when it dried, unlike Alex who could just whip his into a bun or toss a hair over it without the worry of frizz.

But Alex made sure John had a good nice secure bun before they left. Also it irked Alex how John was just going to shove just a t-shirt on with his jacket, Alex however persuaded him to toss on that lovely green cable knit John owned, a jacket and his scarf since it was colder than the south. So John didn't argue, he did and he was thankful when they were outside in the snow.

Alex told John that tomorrow he would take John around the city properly. But John seemed content with all the twinkling lights, the decorations hanging from post to post, Christmas lights off different tall buildings that rocketed up into a cloudy twilight abyss.

What John adored even more was when Alex took his hand, right there in the masses of people, interwound his fingers with John's, their cold fingers now suddenly warm from one another.

Alex could see John's faint smile in the corner of his eye, he was trying to bury it in his scarf but Alex knew that had shook John to his core. Pleased him, made him feel less alone in such a wild, busy, foreign place.

All the shops were lit up still, Christmas goes who were diving in and out of them. Couples hand in hand, piles of friends laughing with handfuls of Starbucks and the odd weirdo with a frappuchino. Carol singers, business men rushing by, tourists snapping and vlogging infront of stores. It was mayhem out here tonight. But Alex loved every moment of it, his town, his city, his fellow people at Christmas and he got to spend it with his beloved.

Alex took John to a restaurant not too far off just an affordable place that sold amazing Spanish food. Since the pair of them had Spanish roots, he just thought it was suited. Also the food was great and John was happy once he was full.

Then Alex suggested they hopped the subway and venture further into the city. John did okay on the packed train, he was budged right up to Alex though. Rested his chin on Alex's shoulder as they rumbled through the underground.

Alex tried to keep John occupied and calm by talking him half to death about stuff that sometimes happens on subways.
The people you get, the crazy fights or arguments people have. John couldn't quite believe it until Alex got up a video on World Star. John snorted, found it hilarious when some guy poundcaked the other.

Then baby animal videos came up which they both gave meek ‘aw's at. But John seemed to be more into anything with violence, people almost getting ran over by cars, challenges gone wrong. While Alex thought it was horrific, John found it amusing. John was holding Alex's phone, busy watching some video of a guy falling off a motorcycle and that was when Alex realised it was their stop.

He gives John a nudge and pulls him along off the train, John not even paying attention to other people, he just barges past and earns a frown or two, off some teenage girls who were getting off just as he was.

As they're heading up the stairwell, Alex gently warns John to be careful since the steps were icy, all while John is finishing off watching the video, then popped up a text message.

At this John frowns.

His eyes turned cold.

Whilst this is happening behind Alex, he is busy and focused on finding an easier route for them both. The crowds are ridiculous, Alex looked back at his boyfriend and he's saying, "Hey, how about we head to - John?" Alex blinked at John like he had just missed something.

"John, what're you doing?" Alex asks, he sees John flicking down his phone, he's obviously reading something.

So Alex is looking over the screen, there he sees all the green and grey bubbles featuring the conversation he was having with somebody. Now Alex was an open person, he truly didn't give a shit. But it rubbed him up the wrong way to have John reading his text messages.

"Who's Eliza?"

Oh no.

Eliza.

Alex's heart almost stopped. In that moment Alex is ripping his phone away from John and huffily stuffing it into his pocket. John is staring at Alex in a sharp way and he tilts his head. Alex swore John's eyes squinted, just that little bit when he did. Great, now Alex was cursing himself for looking too suspicious.

He wasn't hiding anything. Well, he was, still it wasn't as if Alex was two-timing John. Eliza and him were done.

Finished. But Eliza remained so fresh still, a year. Just a year ago they had been together. All their
conversations him and her had were still very precious to Alex.

Even if it was just joking, sending memes to one another or a linking Eliza to a video with baby pandas. It was their thing they still shared. Having John read everything, that invasion, Alex preferred to just keep the pair of them apart.

The relationships were so different. Alex knew Eliza would come up again one day and it would all spill out, for now though, Alex wanted to keep Eliza his.

Even if she wasn't 'his' anymore.

"It's just Liza' that's all" Alex says, though his voice betrayed him. He hadn't heard from Eliza in months. Yet of course, it had to be now. With his new boyfriend in town. John was already sensitive, Alex wasn't sure how to really talk to John about Eliza. He knew John was so touchy sometimes. "I've known her years"

John gives a slow nod, he's flickering his eyes to a band playing there on the corner. A few people pass by, flicking them a pitiful coin or two.

"What?" Alex sighed. "John, what did you read?"

Alex can feel John's hand tighten ever so slightly on his as they start walking again. "Nothing much, just, random things that have nothing to do with me, I guess." John said to him. Alex doesn't know why, yet, he feels guilty.

So he squeezes John's hand back and takes it, shoving their hands into his jacket pocket. John smiled as he does this. Alex leans over to pop a little kiss on John's chilly cheek. "It's all banter, baby, don't worry."

"Why would I be worried?" John asked, he's looking to Alex. A glimmer that doesn't go unnoticed in his bright hazel eyes.

Before Alex could answer, John butted in again with, "Should I be?"

He had that blank look in his eyes.

Alex was frowning now. "The hell? No!"

"Who is she?"

"She's an old bud, that's all John and -"

They're heading into a direction with a huge building now. Alex was about to finish speaking, until
some rude woman bashed into him, her load of shopping bags hanging off her arms, head up in the clouds, sunglasses - actual sunglasses on, a little white and black speckled daschund with a pink collar on its leash.

"Yeah, that's right! Knock into people!" Alex shouts at her. John's eyes widen and he's looking back at this woman then Alex who looked pissed. This woman actually flipped Alex off too and he shouts, "Who even wears sunglasses in winter! Go on, walk off. Blind ass bitch!" And he bidder her a goodbye with his middle finger too.

As they walked off, Alex is huffing to himself about 'how stupid some people are' and 'no concept for others'. John is laughing, finding hilarious but he also gives Alex a kiss to sort out his mood. Then tells Alex 'hey, hears to hoping she gets ran over' or there was, 'maybe she'll break her neck when she slips in them heels'. Any morbid old shit to make Alex feel better, but with Alex so angry, he even agreed.

The place Alex took John to was the Rockefeller observatory deck. They had plenty of time before it shut at midnight and although it wasn't cheap. Alex wanted to treat John since he had dragged him here all the way to New York.

When they got up there John's eyes grew huge and so did his smile.

Thankfully he had forgotten all about Eliza and the messages.

He left Alex's grasp and Alex found it adorable how John bounded like a little kid to the front of the deck. He's looking out, hands on the glass and then runs to one of the telescopes. Alex joins his side and he's putting a hand gently on John's lower back as he's watching the sights of the city.

Alex had seen this view many times, to John, it was so new. Refreshing. Almost as if he was finally able to breathe. The thought of John being liberated from that house, Charleston. It gave Alex some peace, if he were to die tonight. He could go knowing John was able to come here, feel freedom.

Be a new person.

The empire state building tickling the night clouds, all the stars just coated nicely through a transparent sea of clouds. A misty mood was out, the cold chill of the night air dancing around them both.

Alex watched John as it did, he's smiling to himself, the wind wafting through John's loose curls hanging by his ears and the gorgeous constellation of freckles, prominent from his bright red cheeks from the cold.

As John is moving the telescope, he's pointing and awing in amazement. The twinkling bright lights of all the buildings in his trail of sight. Alex moved closer to him, he's leaning down to John's ear and whispers, "What do you think?"

"It's amazing" John said happily. "I love it!" He sounded so bewildered. Alex's heart warmed.

John finished looking some more after an asian couple wanted to have a go on that telescope since the others were being used. They thanked John and Alex before hopping on and taking over. Alex and John stood in the corner, looking out the glass at the view.

"Thank you, not just for taking me here, everything else though" John said to him. He's re-taking Alex's hand, John's slightly longer fingers enrolling themselves into Alex's hand and he pulls Alex to him gently. "I love it"
That was when a pause settled in.

Alex is just staring, almost as if he were star-gazing, right into John's hazel eyes. The glimmers of green among the brown there with the spot light shining on them both from the building. Alex could properly see the colours. They were like a galaxy of their own.

Alex couldn't help himself. He was so content right now, so full of joy. John was here, they ate together, spent time walking around together talking endlessly, laughing like they were living the last day of their lives, had made love twice that day and Alex knew as soon as they got back to his apartment, their clothes were being ripped off, either Alex would be on top or John would. It didn't matter, but, they were going to fuck again.

Hey, maybe two times again or even three, if they could swing it. They could go all night, screw his asshole loud neighbours, they kept him up enough most of the time. Payback was a bitch. It didn't matter, nothing mattered right now.

He didn't care about the scars on John's arms, the emotional tantrums were put to bed, John's mood was amazing and he was the happiest Alex had ever seen him. So bright, like a star. His little star. This artist - His walking, talking, beautiful, galaxy on legs. John filled that space, that emptiness. It had gone.

Alex feels it.

The emotion fluttering in his chest like a hummingbird. Pecking, flapping, dying to break out. Be free.

He's always worn his heart on his sleeve, fuck it. You only live once.

It slipped out.

"And, I love you" Alex said to him.

Alex says it like he's so sure of it. He is, he well and truly is. It's in Alex's big dopey brown eyes, he's chuckling at John's expression. John looked like he had been struck, either by cupid's arrow or punched by Tyson. His eyes are still on Alex, his lips are wavering and Alex swore John's eyes were suddenly that extra bit glassy.

John had to catch his breath for a moment, he's got a hand in his curls, scratching it and he's looking back out on the city. He chewed his lip for a moment or so.

Alex hitched a giggle of his own, he's tugging lightly on John's hand. It was fine if John couldn't say it back, Alex just wanted him to know. John was so loved.

"I just had to tell you" Alex all but whispered. "Been, well, in love with you for a while now Jack.
Love you, a lot. Wait - " Alex puts up a hand and he's rambling, he knows that. John is staring wide-eyed at him still. "I really fucking love you, John Laurens. Sorry if, y'know this is a bit soon but I couldn't not tell you. It's been eating me up, day in, day out. Yeah."

At that John just snickered and he's immediately grasping Alex by his cheeks, John's eyes are smiling and they're brimmed with adoration. Alex wasn't sure if he could fall anymore in love if he tried.

"Alexander Hamilton" John shakes his head and rolls his eyes.

Alex waits for it.

"You really, really, don't know how to shut up, do you?" Well it wasn't really a question. John laughed again and he's ramming Alex into the most passionate kiss they've probably ever had between them. No tongue this time, just lips, moving slowly and lovingly in action.

Alex could feel himself sway, drift off and if he was certain, his heart had wings and it could fly. He was the one feeling helpless this time. But he was satisfied too.

It felt like a movie, one of those cheesy chick flicks, where the geeky girl gets the jock everyone loves. Or - where the guy gets the guy more like.

They pull away, their lips creating a soft noise as they do and John, he's still got his hands on Alex's cheeks, thumbs against his bit of scruff that remained after a good shave this afternoon.

He's looking into Alex's eyes, smiled again and murmured, "I love you too"

His voice broke as he did and Alex felt himself weaken, he's pulling John into another kiss, then another.

Some people pass them and they're shouting "congratulations!". It's funny because Alex and John just laugh since people must've thought Alex or John had proposed. But Alex shouted back to them "He's just said he loved me back!" and they cheered for them, said they wished both of them well before walking off the desk and indoors.

That was what it felt like in some way, a proposal. Not for marriage but for each other, to always be by one another's side, love and care for one another. A marriage of the heart.

As they're both trying to cool down, John's still bright red but he leans his head against Alex's and cheekily chuckled, "Maybe someday, you'll actually marry me. Right?"

Alex balled his eyes. He ruffled John's hair as he did. "Now you're just being cocky"

"How can I fucking not be?! You just told me you loved me!" John practically screamed and he's dragging Alex by the collar of his jacket into another kiss. "Well, you better put a ring on this finger." John cackled and he's actually showing Alex's ring finger too. Alex is looking at him stunned. "Just joking!"

His brow rose up at John. Alex found that quite hard to believe.

"Day-um, easy baby" Alex snorted. Then John went back in for another heated kiss, leaving Alex
breathless, he's got him panting, Alex can't even think straight, "Holy fucking, fuck."

They're the only ones there, apart from some older man and two women on the other side of the deck looking out the windows, snapping some pictures.

Alex and John carelessly make out right there, as they do, John is dominating the kiss and he's got Alex's hands in his. He turns them around so that Alex is laying back against the glass, Alex didn't realise he was stood up against it until he opened his eyes.

Now Alex wasn't really that bothered by heights, but seeing how he was this close up against the glass, the city literally just below him, it drove chills up his spine. "Um, John" Alex murmured, between kisses.

At this John stopped and he's looking back at Alex cluelessly.

"I'm right up against this thing" Alex tried to make a joke out of it. He's forcefully laughing, as he is, Alex is looking back and forth at the glass then to John again.

John chewed his lip.

"Not saying that I'm scared or some shit, but what if this breaks?" Alex sounded nervous.

Yet John could only snort, he's narrowed his eyes at Alex like he was stupid and he's giving him one last kiss before yanking Alex off the glass window. "As if I would ever let you fall off -" John says, naughtily and a little teasing too. Alex was thankful for John ripping him away from there. He had been right up against it, his entire bodyweight, for gods sake.

Alex could still feel his heart drumming.

"Then again, like I'd ever let you leave me!" John laughs. "Nope, never, ever." He's dabbing Alex on the nose with his finger. Alex tries to laugh along with him. "Jesus, Alexander. Don't look so scared! I wouldn't let anything happen to you. Never. Promise you that, right now." And John kisses the top of his hand.

More than anything though Alex was happy to be away from the glass. As a child, he had almost fell out of a ride at a carnival when the Washingtons took him to Vermont.

They were visiting some extended family there, a carnival was in town and Alex went off with some of his cousins, well, foster cousins. The ride Alex went on with them, it was high, swung you upside down and Alex remembered.

He had been such a skinny little runt as a kid, Alex recalled how it swung upside down in mid-air, half-way through the night sky. Alex remembered screaming, when he nearly slipped out of from the safety bar and knocked his head against the glass barrier. The glass had actually cracked leaving him with a poor bruise on his forehead. But that reminded him - how close he can been to falling out.

It had been absolutely terrifying. Mortifying even.

After that event Alex never went on anymore rides, he went back to the Washingtons shaken up. George was screaming at his cousins for taking him on such a slapstick joke of a ride at only ten years of age.

Then, oh, then threatened to get in the car and drive to the carnival, so he could give the carny running that ride a piece of his mind. Luckily it never came to that. Alex had pissed the bed,
Martha came bundling in at four in the morning with new sheets and to calm a hysterical little Alex down.

God, it all just remembered him of that one true terrible experience.

He was snapped out of his sea of memories by John, who looked fairly concerned, he placed a hand on Alex's forehead and he said, "You look like you've just seen someone get killed" John said softly. "No lie"

Alex gives him a little smile and shakes his head. "M'fine, honest."

"Good. Cos, I'm here, don't be so frightened. Not leaving you." He said reassuringly to Alex.

Then after another hour venturing the city together, Alex took John back home with him, both of them dazed from their confessions, running out of a taxi like stupid teenagers and Alex had been right.

As soon as they got home, the clothes were off, the thermostat was on full blast, they were sweaty, rolling around blissfully in the bed sheets.

Alex was calling John's name as he was being plundered into, the bed creaking and he's wallowing moans that bounce off the apartment walls. He can feel John's nails spiral into him as they're love-making, it hurt and felt amazing at the same time.

As John shaggy loose curls are tickling his face, the thickened girth of his cock bludgeoning in and out of him, tears practically gathered in the corners of Alex's eyes from both joy and pleasure. It's when John stops after reaching his limit, that heat of cum guzzling inside his asshole and John passing out practically on top of him.

That's when Alex realised, he couldn't imagine a life without John. No matter what happened. He wanted to share his life with him, tell him everything that had ever happened to him - the good, the bad, the ugly. Everything.

Maybe it was his own abandonment issues kicking in, they had stemmed from such a young age from when Alex was in the system. After his mother's death, his father's absence. Kicked from family to family like a used football.

There had been Eliza - for a time.

But John was hellbent on staying with him, Alex knew it. Two lonely hearts that were now a whole heart.

It was probably past one by now, they had gotten home for half-ten. John was heaving on top of Alex still, the moonlight shone in through the blinds, their slitted pattern marking John's back. Alex sighed a little, his fingers were tousling John's hair as he was thinking. John lay with his eyes closed still. They would probably fall asleep like this.

"Love you" John said sleepily.

Alex snorted softly. He smiled to himself lazily.

"Me too" Alex says back. "Sh, baby. Sleep."
For now, things were perfect.

Chapter End Notes

God it's been a week since I've uploaded! My hand has been seriously hurting and I've just been taking my sweet time. I'm sorry - here you go!

Yay! So they confessed and they're in the greatest city in the worldddd! :>

I literally had to google Rockefeller and the deck thingy for this... and go off the images for this... sorry if it's a bit inaccurate! I tried!

But how long will things stay sweet for our boys? ehehehe

I also got tumblr so if any of you want to talk or message it is:
littlepinkphoenix.tumblr.com

IMPORTANT MESSAGE: A lot of people are asking about my other fic “Yes, you are enough” and please understand, I appreciate you all. I am sorry I have not updated it this week but I am struggling to balance writing two, very long detailed fics with chapters among 10-13K words each. It isn’t easy and my hand is starting to become overbearingly pained from writing so much. I feel like I could be on the verge of carpal tunnel.

Also too much computer time isn’t doing me good at all. My family is starting to complain... I have to finish updates on my phone a lot due to this. Please understand why I haven’t been able to update. I will update but it may just be slow updates until my hand gains some life back to it.

Thank you for all the love guys! It means a lot to me. I appreciate your support, kudos and feedback! So, so much! <3 x
The next day Alex was showing John around the city.

John was like a small child on their birthday, full of glee and excitement.

They went all around Times Square, Alex took him back to Central Park for the ice rink, it was great. Alex kept falling on his ass, his sore ass and John found it hilarious. He would always help Alex up though. He had to guide and show Alex how to ice-skate. John was really good at it - then again, he had done it a lot growing up. Alex remembered John's story about Mary, after all.

Afterwards, they did a few of the department stores, although John wasn't really used to big places like Macys or Bloomingdales. Mostly just a few of the parlours downtown in Charleston that did the finer clothes which John had grown up with. Still they had a look in anyway.

Alex took John on another tour along broadway, he even suggested a musical just for something to do, John however scrunched up his nose and asked Alex if he was going soft. Alex tells John he loved musicals, he had always loved them growing up. Alex used to audition in any he could back in high school.

The arts were such an amazing way to express oneself, yet John didn't appear pleased. He just looks at Alex like he's lost it and Alex tries to shake off a feeling.

John sees the way Alex looked when he had dismissed on seeing a musical, so John takes Alex's hand again and tells him, that 'he didn't need to see a pile of actors dick around on stage'.

Then laughed and said 'he could act just as good as they could'. Alex didn't get by what John meant.

John giggled to himself and told Alex not to worry about it before saying they could stick a musical movie on when they got home. As always, John could be bizarre sometimes and Alex didn't think much of it.

When they got hungry, there was more than a million places to choose from.

John said he wanted somewhere fun, lively and interesting. They ended up going to this amazing pizza restaurant, it was huge inside. Music blasting off, it was hammered inside too, John and Alex managed to grab a table by the window for two.

Well, they had initially got placed at a table by the end of the room. But John however bounded over to the window table which actually the couple before them got. John beat them to it though, then he's ushering Alex over. Alex who's walking past this couple that is glowering at both, him and John.

John blatantly ignored the two of them and the girl's boyfriend, who said they got seated there first. John gave the guy a cut-look and lied saying that this table was reserved for him and Alex.

The boyfriend gave up and went off to his girlfriend who was heading for another table, far from them, thankfully.
Alex is shaking his head at John, he's trying not to laugh and John gives Alex a little wink.

Then John grabs his menu, eyeing up the pizzas, before deciding which he's going to go for. In the end they just decided on one together, a gorgeous, scrumptious, Christmas themed meat feast with this nice garlic chilli cheese in the stuffed crust.

They pig out, John pays the bill before Alex can grab out his wallet and they stumble from the restaurant feeling slightly sick but content all at the same time.

After another look around the city, they manage to burn off their dinner. But only now Alex can feel his thirst pent up and he's asking John if they could go for one drink. John looked slightly hesitant but he agreed. It was reaching eight in the evening now, it felt too early to go home yet. A drink wouldn't hurt and after all that exploring, walking, today Alex was in dire need of a beer.

They go to a decent bar which is cosy, it is lively enough, full, but it isn't raving with mental students, mostly people around Alex's age and older. John looked like he felt out of place.

Alex laughed at his expression and told him to lighten up. John gives Alex a smug little look and what surprised Alex next, though, was as soon as they got inside. He was seeing John go up to the counter first.

John already knew what Alex drank, so he asked for one Corona Extra for Alex and a Sam Adams for himself.

Fucking Sam Adams.

At this Alex's eyes almost fell out of his head, then he was shocked that John even had an I.D.

He hadn't even known.

How could Alex not have known this. He's stunned.

John is flashing it, Alex even spots John's driving license too. It's ridiculous and sad - John was twenty-one. He was old enough and adult enough to do what he wanted. Most people could drive, but, John was a hermit. Alex was just so, surprised.

Then John quickly puts his I.D. away in his wallet and stuffed it into his jeans pocket.

They're at the bar patiently waiting for their drinks among the other people next to them. Alex is mooching up to John, he's playfully smacking the back of John's head. John drops his mouth open and looking at Alex as if to say 'did you really' on his face.

"Oh, really!" John whined.

Alex looked at John astonished. "Don't you give me that hog-shit! Since when do you drink?!" Alex cried, he's looking John up and down.

John always complained about drinking whenever Alex had a beer. This was just, so new.

"Oh my god" Alex says, he can't actually believe it. He was going to see his boyfriend, drink, for the first time.

John even told Alex he didn't like beer. At this John looked a bit skittish and he's scratching the back of his neck sheepishly. "I'm not that much of a wet blanket, god." John griped.

Alex burst out laughing at that. Then John was staring back at Alex who is leaning against the bar
"Well..." John starts, he's gone back to looking over at the bartender and watching them pour their drinks. "You know, how I was homeschooled?"

Alex furrowed his brow. What that had to do with John's schooling and alcohol, Alex had no idea.

Then Alex snorted and laughed. He knew, he knew.

"Don't tell me, baby, did you and your tutor get pissed together?" John rolled his eyes, he had to grin though. Alex poked John on his chest. "That's it! Isn't it?! You're did! You're, so, damn, naughty!"

With John's lopsided smile, which practically turns Alex's insides into mush. John puts a hand on Alex's lower back from behind. He looked so relaxed right now, Alex was proud of him. This new founded confidence, especially when John pulled him in there in public.

That was another thing Alex had noted as of late. Since John had been in New York, he had came right out of his shell. If this was what New York was doing for him - heck. Alex was so down for John being with here for college. He loved John like this even more.

In New York, you really could be a new man.

"Not quite that, Alexander." John chuckled. Then he's side-eyeing the bartender for a second, looking unsure. "I was more naughty when I was still in school actually." Alex's eyebrows raised up in shock.

He didn't know John had it in him.

John is tapping his other hand on the counter, his fingers dancing along with the song playing. Still waiting for their drinks.

Alex hummed. "Bet you weren't -" Then leaned in closer to John, his smile widening. "I bet you were real sweet, one of those little good boys. Always did their homework on time. Reminded the teacher about pop quizzes. Such a apple polisher I'll bet." Alex pushed. "You're too cute to be bad!" Alex even pulls at John's cheek. John swatted him away as he laughed lightly.

John's eyes glimmered.

They said otherwise, Alex couldn't quite pin-point what though.

Especially when John slightly narrowed them and he flickered his eyes to the counter.

Their drinks were ready, Alex is about to take his, but John takes them both. "You lead the way" John tells Alex and gives him a little nudge in the side when he does.

As they're walking off to a table just up the few little steps, that area looked quieter there. There were plenty of people up where they were heading, there were plenty of people, everyone laughing and having a good time. It was such a nice atmosphere, especially with the lights were in a cool dim purple and the seats were glow in the dark bean bags. John and Alex were in awe at them, both said 'so fucking cool' at the same time before laughing.

"You give me too much credit, Y'know that?" John chuckled as they're sitting down.

They both laugh when they plonk down on the bean bags, Alex winced because his backside was
still aching, John teasingly bobbed his brows when Alex caught his eye. Obvious, Alex knew what was up and he gave John a playful kick in the shin.

Alex doesn't miss how John dives straight for his beer either. He's engulfing half his pint within seconds and Alex is amazed. It was so strange to see John actually drink. Right there - pint in hand. "Jesus christ" Alex laughed breathily.

"Baby, if you wanted a beer, you should've said"

John shakes his head as he's placing his pint down. He's smacking his lips together, relishing the taste and leans back with a 'mph'. He's looking back to Alex with a lazy smile. "It's been ages, I mean a couple of years since I've had a proper drink. Don't really like to do it often, not anymore."

"Oh, so, you used to?" Alex questioned, he's taking a sip of his own and brow rises up again.

At this, John nods. He looks wary though. Alex noted how John is doing that scratching thing at his neck again.

"Mm, used to drink and smoke in school." John meekly says. He looked ashamed of himself. Alex gives him a sympathetic smile. "I had these two friends, well, they were my only friends - actually. We were close. Used to do dumb shit together, drink, smoke, get high as fuck. Until my father found out though and beat the shit out of me." John finished coldly, with a small sigh.

Alex's smile faltered but he wasted no time putting a hand on John's knee. He gave it a loving pat. "You were a teenager" Alex said. "It was bound to happen"

But John shook his head.

He's looking down into his lap. "I drank heavily after school, in school hour, before school. Hell, Charles would steal whatever he could off his father. Me, him and another friend. We would sneak under the bleachers or at the back on the grounds, we would get so wrecked -" John giggled at the memory of it. Alex had to do so with him.

"That half the time, I'd turn up to class trying to sober up. Teachers caught on, I was always lying to them. But they could obviously smell it on me, bud and cigarettes."

John sighed again. "Didn't really help with the cutting either, it only made it worse. I had to stop the drinking, smoking, felt like shit." John told him. "Also, I mean, looking back, I regret dicking around in school a lot. It affected everything else so badly. But when I was bullied in middle school and finally left for Private school - well, high school. I just wanted some fun, now that I finally had friends."

Alex nods. It sounded so sad really. Alex assumed John must've felt really lonely back then. Misunderstood, confused.

Then that made Alex think back to Facebook. Those two boys John was stood with in that photo. Obviously those were who John was talking about. The short blonde one, Alex couldn't recall his name. He had been the one who worked in the book store from the other day.

The same one John had been arguing with.

Alex did wonder why they fell out. But he mentioned nothing of it.

"Felt good" John said continuing. Then he's gone back to grabbing his drink and downing the rest.
Alex was leant on their little table, his elbow keeping him upright as he watched John. "Then, everything fell on its ass, heh."

Alex tilts his head slightly. "What do you mean? How honey?"

Just when Alex saw John shake his head a little, Alex squeezes John's knee. He wanted to know deep down. John never spoke about his past much in depth. Although he was nosey, Alex wanted to rid some of that steam out of John. It'd make him feel tons better.

With another sigh, John shrugs and suddenly he's enraged growling out, "It's just - a lot of things went wrong. Fell out with my friends, those bastards, fucking bastards!" Alex winced at the full force John used with his fist on the small table there. "They joined in on this fucking hate campaign my grade had going online. Someone actually made a hate page about me." John darted his eyes over to Alex, he sneered.

"Pathetic, right?" Alex nodded in agreement, he knew exactly what John was talking about. It was pathetic. "Then I got taken out of school. I hated being homeschooled, day in, day out, in that goddamn house. Oh my god, same shit, different day." John groaned. "I was really losing the world to live back then."

John frowned to himself as he roamed a hand through his hair, he had his curls down today. They looked gorgeous too, in their usual silky ringlets. Alex dreamily heaved a small sigh to himself as he reached to take a stand of one, to play with.

He's twirling one around his finger and pulling it, he lets go, so he can watch it go back into its natural state. John watched as he did.

"They aren't worth your time, any of them." Alex tells John. "Nothing but losers, baby, ignore them."

At that John smiled at Alex. Then he's getting up, telling Alex he was just heading for the bathroom.

With John gone, Alex goes to check his phone.

He promised Washington that he would pay him a visit before Christmas, his step-mother, Martha was hounding Alex to come along for Christmas and told him to bring John. He knew what Martha was like, she would talk John's ears off and embarrass Alex by telling John stories of Alex's mishaps, his pasts and possibly bring up Eliza.

Alex couldn't have that.

Not yet.

But Alex wanted to spend Christmas with John, just the two of them, at home.

Basking in each other's company, making their first Christmas together special. Full of food, Alex wanted to cook together, watch the same repetititive Christmas movies with each other, chat about nonsense, cuddle and have amazing sex. That was all Alex wanted. An easy life, an easy
Christmas.

There were a few messages from Angelica asking him to hang out, another from his pals Hercules and Lafayette. Alex would meet up with them before he went back to Charleston. It's the least he could do and Alex did miss his goofy gang. They were one of a kind.

Hercules was hosting a Christmas party in the new few days, Alex really wanted John to meet them. Introduce them to his new boyfriend. It'd be nice and it would be good for John too, finally meeting new people. John would really like them, they were such easy going guys.

Then Alex wandered onto Facebook and he went on a search again.

He's searching for John's brother, Henry Laurens, Alex is glad when he pops up there from his search history. Henry changed his picture recently, it's amazing just how much like John he looked. If it wasn't for the darker hair and eyes, they could be twins. But Henry looked more like James the most. They were little Johns - but with shorter hair. Alex couldn't imagine John with short hair.

There Henry's grinning with a pal stood by a Christmas tree. Drinks in their hands, he looked half-cut. Totally on the piss.

Then Alex is on his album again, he's gone off to find the picture with John and the other two. Alex finds it, quickly Alex looks up from his phone to see if John's back yet and he isn't.

Alex clicks on it and Alex is tapping on it. He sees their names once again and this time Alex memorises them.

Charles Lee.

Samuel Seabury.

That was him, the guy from the book store. Samuel. The same little puffed-up-twink-twerp John had been screaming at.

Alex taps on Sam's name and he immediately comes up. Sam pops up there, he's this weedy looking thing sat on his sofa holding a puppy. A pair of bright purple tight jeans on, a pride bracelet on, he's grinning from ear to ear at this cocker-spaniel he's holding.

Alex rolls his eyes at the banner he had on his page, it's fucking Disney Land and Sam is stood by the castle with a pair of pink millennial minnie ears on.

Samuel thought he was cute.

He really wasn't.
"What an ass" Alex mutters to himself.

Sam was a real pansy then. Alex had to laugh to himself though, it was quite amusing flicking through some of Sam's pictures. This guy even had a pet parrot too. Good, god. But Alex was following through with what he intended to do anyway, he presses the message button and sends a brief which one saying:

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Do you know John Laurens, by any chance?

Alex looked up again, John still wasn't back yet. It wasn't that Alex wanted him to rush back, but John was taking ages. Alex assumed that pizza must've gone right through him.

He snorts at that thought. As long as it was here, not his apartment, Alex didn't care. But Alex knew how nosey John was when Alex was texting. Even his friends and parents, John had asked who it was.

Not in a horrible kind of way, he always sounded curious than anything else. Still though. If John knew Alex was messaging his old school friend - one John hated. He would flip.

To Alex's surprise, Sam messaged him right away. Alex's eyes lit up and he's licking his lip.

♡ Sammi Seabury ♡ :

Who is this?

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Just answer the question

Alex leant back on the bean bag, sighing. "C'mon Sam, just answer it" He murmured.

Impatiently Alex is watching the little speech bubble with the dots in, Sam was typing back. God,
how long did it take!

♡ Sammi Seabury ❤️ :

Yea I do... why?

Alex smiled. Finally.

Alexander Hamilton:

Why did you two fall out?

Alex knew it was very bold. Too bold to ask. But fuck it.

♡ Sammi Seabury ❤️ :

Wtf! I don't know you! Why would I tell you?!

Alexander Hamilton:

I'm his boyfriend. I have a few questions about John, that's all. Just answer them and I'll leave you alone.

Another sigh to himself. He hoped this Sam would just follow through and tell Alex what he wanted.

♡ Sammi Seabury ❤️ :
Oh wait I remember you! From the other day... you were with him.

"Now we're getting somewhere" Alex rolled his eyes. They had to hurry, John was probably on his way back by now.

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Yeah, that's me. I just need to know a few things.

♡ **Sammi Seabury ♡ :**

Ask him yourself

Alex grips at his phone. Goddammit.

**Alexander Hamilton:**

He won't tell me.

Just then Sam sends Alex a GIF of a cat laughing and Alex narrows his eyes. This little bastard was annoying. All Alex wanted was an answer.

♡ **Sammi Seabury ♡ :**

Then your doomed. You and him. If you can't talk to him, it's game over for you. But then again, you're already screwed. If he's your boyfriend. Lmao!
One of Alex's eyes twitched. "The fuck..." He muttered. "Just tell me, you little shit."

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Dude, just tell me. What was that the other day? You had John freaking the fuck out when he got home. Not cool.

Yet again, Sam sent another laughing GIF.

♡ Sammi Seabury ♡:

LOL

♡ Sammi Seabury ♡:

So he's *still* playing the victim? I thought those days were over... but then of course, it's John Laurens.

Alex gritted his teeth. He was losing his shit now.

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Just fucking tell me. Why won't you tell me?! Stop being an asshole! There is something I obviously don't know! Just spill.

Sam started to write and he stopped mid-way. Alex groaned as he tossed his head back, he stared at the dim blue lights from above. He wasn't getting anywhere fast with this guy.

So then, after a moment, Alex drifted his eyes back to his screen and finds a reply there waiting.

Alex frowns. As if.

Alexander Hamilton:

Why? TF

Sammi Seabury: I don't know you Alexander Hamilton, but the best thing you can do, is leave him.

That was just rude. Alex scoffed.

Alexander Hamilton:

Jealous much? Fuck you.

Sammi Seabury: Oh, whatever. Fuck off yourself. I'm trying to help you from ruining your life. Because that is what John is, he's a life ruiner. He ruins peoples lives. Plays the blame game. He hurts people.
At this Alex's frown fades, he takes in what Sam is telling him. That was the thing, why did he say that about John. It was no good telling Alex, he needed facts. What had John done?

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Why is he a life ruiner? What don't I know?

Alex is tapping his fingers on the table. Waiting.

♡ Sammi Seabury ♡ :

He'll break you.

Just as Alex was going to reply to that, he hears footsteps and as Alex is looking up, he finds John there with two more pints. He's all smiles for Alex as he's placing them down. Alex looked up at him, he's giving John a quick smile and accepting his drink.

"Sorry, I was ages queuing up. God, it's really filling up in here." John chuckled. "That okay? Did you want anything else?"

Alex shakes his head, he's taking another sip of his new pint. "Nah, this is great. Thanks baby." As John sits back down, he's leaning to give Alex a little kiss on the lips, as he does he's caressing Alex's cheek and nuzzles his nose against his own. John's hair tickled his face, Alex laughed as this happened before John sat back down.

For a moment he forgets about Sam.

John is lapping down his new pint himself and he's eyeing Alex up. He looked so happy right then. Alex felt guilt sneak up on him, going back behind John's back like that. It was wrong - sure. But still, the curiosity only grated on him even more now.

"What've you been up to?" John questioned, he's staring right at Alex and dropping his gaze.

Alex realises John's looking at his phone there on the table. Alex's phone lights up, it obviously captures John's attention and before he can have a chance to look, Alex swipes it up, he sees it's Sam again. In the pocket his phone went. Out of sight, out of mind.

"Just chatting to pops" Alex lied.

He takes another mouthful of his beer and looked over the dancing trio over by the bar. Three
women, one of them screeching loudly in laughter, the other two were tipsy and nearly toppling over. John kept on staring at him though. Alex could feel it even when he wasn't looking.

"Oh really" John says, plainly.

Alex gives a subtle nod and turns back to his boyfriend. John is leaning forward on the table, straight up staring at him. Soft smile there on his lips, Alex wonders what John was thinking. "Uh, yeah. Told him that we'll be over this weekend." Alex tells him. He hadn't told Washington shit though. Alex reminded himself to text his step-dad later.

John hummed and he's beaming brightly. He arches his fists up on his chin, resting down on them. "You've told your father about me? Damn, Alexander." He says cockily. "Wow, we're moving fast. But I'm honoured. I get to meet the parents. Awesome."

"Kinda -" Alex laughed. John gave him a nudge under the table. He didn't look so cocky now, John was practically pouting. Then Alex squabbles out with, "Well, he knows of you, knows who you are, obviously. But I'd rather announce that we're together in person. I want you to meet my folks properly, honey."

John nods, he immediately looked happier. "That's really sweet. I can't wait to meet them." He said softly.

As Alex was about to respond, his phone rings. He shoots John a weary look. He takes it out and Alex sees that it's Lafayette. John is baring daggers at his phone and then sharply looks to Alex. "You gonna answer that?"

But Alex shuts it off and puts his phone back in his pocket. "Nah, it's only Laf."

"Laf?" John said, he pulls a puzzled face. "The fuck kind of name is Laf?"

Alex snickered. "He's called Lafayette, we all call him 'Laf' for short. He's french and has around ten names, in his actual fucking name." John looked so confused, he's nodding along though, trying to keep up. Alex is still laughing. "God, it's a joke! We all take the absolute piss out of his name, it's hilarious. He's a great guy! You'll love him."

John didn't look too sure about that. He bites his bottom lip and takes another sip of his pint.

"French, huh?" John says like it's a disease. "Frogs legs and snails. Sick fuckers. Ain't that some shit."

Alex throws John a warning look, John's smirking but his smile came across more mean and condescending than anything else.

"Oh, shut up." Alex said jokingly. John's brow rose at that. "No, but, uh, baby - I've known him since college. When he came here, he couldn't speak a lick of English." Alex says grinning. Oh Lafayette, he was hilarious. John pouts when Alex doesn't see. "Had to translate for him, left, right and center."

Just then John's eyes were golfballs. "Wait, what?"

Alex turns to him and blinks. "Hm?"

"Wait, you translated?" John says sounding shocked. "You speak french? Fucking french - Alexander, since when?"
"Since forever. My mom, my birth mom. She, uh, she spoke french fluently." Alex told him. It was hard to bring her up and Alex's heart ached but it was okay. It was John after all. He wanted him to know. John understood loss. "She was originally from the Caribbean, this island, Nevis in St. Kitts." Alex then added "They speak french there and she came here where she met my real dad." Alex said shrugging.

"Uh-huh" John said. "Well, aren't you full of surprises. Beautiful and smart." Alex's stomach ties in knots.

John was beaming at him.

Alex downs his pint before re-checking his phone and John does the same. It was almost nine now.

"You gonna speak french to me at some point then?" John says playfully.

Alex scoffed. John leans forward, he's grinning cheekily. "C'mon, I wanna hear it."

"No!" Alex laughs.

Then John snickered with, "I bet you can't even speak French"

Alex squinted at him. "You wanna bet?"

"Go on then" John pressured. "Do it"

"What do you even want me to say?" Alex laughed. He's swatting John on the shoulder.

John bites his lip.

"Anything, I wanna hear it." John giggled.

So to shut John up, Alex did and blurted out with, "Ne sais pas quoi dire mais je pense que tu es belle". John leant back with a dorky smile and he's fluttering his eyes in total bewilderment. Alex just grins all smugly.

"Damn" John rasps. "That was hot." And Alex can feel one of John's hand's on his knee under the small table. He's squeezing him. "Never really thought much of french, until I heard it from you."

"Well, you know me. Baby, I don't disappoint." Alex says laughing. "Anyway -" He's clasping John's hand under the table. "Shall we shoot off? I think I'm fit for bed, you wear me out."

John then leans back in, smirking. "Not wore you out just yet." He purred. Alex rolls his eyes as he laughed again. God, John and his high libido. There they went again. "Think you can spit out some of that french when we get home?"

Alex could only smirk back. They get a move on minutes later, then they're outside on the curb, John is already all over him and Alex is putting his hand out for a cab.

The following day after Alex takes John up the statue of liberty. The ferry fee is cheap enough and they arrive on Ellis Island in no time. John is amazed by the sight from up there, it's amazing. The horizon staring right back at them, as the famous monument welcomed the world.
It was breathtaking.

They're inside her at the very top, John managed to get the first top window spot, after pushing some little kid out the way when neither Alex or the kid's parents weren't looking and he pulls Alex over so they're together.

Alex snaps some pictures on his phone, as does John and they share a sweet kiss to finish their day trip.

After they're back in the city, John recommended they start to dress up Alex's apartment since it was bare and had no Christmas decorations up. Alex did have a few of them but after Eliza left, Alex hadn't bothered last year. But now, with John, Alex was all for it. He was ready to move on and enjoy himself this year.

So now they're going into a few department stores and Alex was glad he had taken this caretaking job on. He didn't really mention any of it to John, since their relationship had changed.

Alex no longer really thought of himself as John's carer anymore, well, he still did look after John, but, differently since they were an item. But each month Eleanor had topped up his bank account with a good amount of money, thousands. It was great.

But it wasn't just about the money. He had gotten the chance to meet her son, his John.

It was such a life changer. Alex was glad he took up the opportunity.

Still having disposable income was always handy, especially at Christmas since everything out right now was amazing. All the special offers, the fancy Christmas coffees and hot chocolates, all the amusements outside, fancy gift sets and all sorts. All the nice things that made Christmas special.

The shops of course were heaving, Alex took John's hand as John leads Alex into a few places that caught his eye. It was an arcade center and Alex was rolling his eyes. But John was demanding they went in, occasionally yanked on Alex's arm until he thought it would fall off. Sometimes John did it too hard though. John would plead and pout cutely at Alex, who of course couldn't ever say no.

John was in his own little world.

Having a go on some of the games, losing poorly and Alex is just standing around behind him digging fun at him. John spots the photo booths at the back, it's packed with mostly tourists and kids but John and Alex manage to grab one of the booths.

Alex didn't get it. He stresses they could take pictures with their phones, but John said that taking actual photographs together was special. Alex had to admit, it kind of was nowadays. So they hop inside it, John is patting his lap, so for a joke Alex sits on John and he's kicking out his leg, hanging his arms around John's neck, posing the most ridiculous face ever like he's a blushing bride on her wedding day.

They get a good few photos, funny ones mostly because they were idiots and they didn't care if they were hogging the machine for too long. Some teenage girl knocked on and told them to hurry up.

John responded with a loud, almighty 'fuck off' and even put his hand out of the curtain with a one-fingered salute. Alex's overbearing laughter was blaring from outside. Everyone queueing could probably hear them. But they didn't care.
The last photos they take was a serious one, Alex in John's lap, John's arms around his waist and they're both smiling. Then the remaining one on the end of the strip, was John giving Alex the biggest kiss on his cheek, Alex cheekily laughing.

They stumbled out the booth, ignoring the glares from people who had been waiting and they're admiring their strips of photos. John tells Alex he was keeping them forever.

Once they're done at the arcade, they go to a few stores. John picks some of the cute one off little decorations, Alex is looking at books. But it doesn't last for long when John is trying to get Alex to take interest in the Christmas stuff. So Alex does, to please John and they get a handful of things. Including from the supermarket too since barely anything was in at home.

They had to hop another cab again since Alex was just not carting their bags on the subway and John looked just as worn out himself too.

It had been such a long day. But they're hit with a second-wind come evening time though.

Alex is doing a bit of cooking and John had helped him until he got in the way, Alex sent him off to finish putting decorations on the tree. Alex helps John while their dinner is cooking, they have the apartment looking like Santa's grotto in no time though. John is super excited, Alex isn't sure he's ever seen John this delighted before.

All the bareness had gone from his brick walls, John had done them up nicely with these pretty silver garlands and he had managed to put up some stockings. The tree is up, it's only a small one up on a spare table but it's still beautiful. The little new shiny gold star on the top is gorgeous, John picked it out earlier.

Now Alex was glad in a sense since the last one was Eliza's. John had asked if Alex wanted it still but Alex said to just toss it away in the trash. So John did, without even giving it as much of a second glance.

John stands back with Alex to take a good look around at the living room. It looked great. Alex pulls John into a side hug and he's holding him.

"Jesus christ, John. You've worked yourself to the bone!" Alex laughed. John was giggling in his hold. "Looks amazing, thank you." Then again John could make anything look awesome, he was so talented. Alex felt so lucky.

"Oh yeah" John said to Alex, he's slipping out of his grasp and John is walking back to the box of Alex's old decorations. "I forgot to ask you -" Alex walked over to where John was as he listened.

"When I was looking through these, I found this" And John is pulling out a bauble with fake snow inside, it had "ELIZA" written inside on a plastic disk and "ALEX" on the back of her name. John gave it a little shake as he watched the disk spin with the snow inside.

Alex had forgotten all about that. It was a custom made bauble that him and Eliza had made from a Christmas market stall a couple of years ago.
His heart sank.

John was shaking it again, examining it with a blank face.

Alex then looked back to John from the bauble and he sees who John is staring at him. He's obviously waiting on an explanation. John shakes it again. His fingers carelessly toying with the silver tie around his fingers.

"Ah, shit, yeah." Alex said sheepishly.

He definitely had to tell John now.

Then John says, "There's little heart confetti inside this -" He snickered. "Cute"

It was now or never. So Alex swallowed his pride and fear as he spat out, "She's my ex"

Alex felt numb after confessing. He's staring at John who is then locking eyes with him, sharply. Then John smiled and he's playing it off with a giggle. Alex just knows he's bothered by it. It's there in John's eyes. "You're telling me something, that I don't already know?" Alex's brow knitted in confusion.

Wait so John knew about her.

That didn't make sense.

"You knew?"

John nodded. "Well, yeah. You got defensive when I asked who she was the other night after she text and after seeing this -" John held up the bauble higher for emphasis. Alex's adams apple bobbed as he did. He didn't like John knowing about her.
It was as if John was airing his dirty laundry. Alex felt so bad for hiding Eliza and not telling John sooner now. "It was kind of obvious" John sighed.

Alex hated how skittish he was right now. John could see it plain as day too, he's eyeing Alex up and Alex is stood there, hands in his pockets staring into space. But Alex snapped out of it, he's snatching the bauble off John and just stuffing it back in the box.

"I'll throw these out later" Alex blabbed. "We've already got nice new ones, so there isn't any point keeping these."

Then John says, "You don't have to get so... uptight." John told him.

He's fluttering his fingers through Alex's hair and then gives Alex's shoulder a light squeeze. "You have an ex-girlfriend, so? That's fine. It doesn't bother me."

"It doesn't?"

John sighed at Alex. Then John is grabbing Alex by his other shoulder firmly now, both of them under his hands. Alex swore he could feel John's nails dig into him lightly. "No, god. I mean, as long as you're actually into me, and that you're actually bisexual and not going to bounce back to her in a weeks time. I don't care." It was the way John said it.

So firm, coldly. How he stared right into Alex's eyes.

Not threateningly but enough to make Alex feel chills.

Alex frowns at John. He didn't get where that had come from.

"What?" Alex slipped out.

But John shook his head, he smiled at Alex and pecked his cheek. "C'mon, let's get dinner okay? I'm absolutely, starving. So hungry, I knew we should've got something when we were out." John whined. "Tomorrow I am, so, taking you out, no objections -" John threw Alex a look and poked his nose cutely. "It's date night and that's final. Got it?"

Alex huffed and replied with a simple "Got it"

John looked satisfied after that.

They went back into the kitchen to finish off dinner and sat on the sofa polishing off their meal.

Even if it was Christmas - tacos were a total must all year round. Alex threw on some cranberry sauce on his and said it was a Christmas special version. It almost had John gagging.

After dinner and a warm bath together, they were lounging around on the sofa. Elf was playing on
the TV, John was doing some sketching and for once he wasn't drawing Alex. Instead it looked like a Christmas tree and a turtle doves.

Alex was still feeling pretty peckish, they had eaten over two hours ago and he was munching away on chips, checking his phone every so often. Peggy kept popping up on messenger, she'd bought a new kitten recently and it was just the cutest. She kept sending him pictures and had him dressed in a tiny santa suit.

John was talking to Alex about something, Alex wasn't paying much attention, he gave a nonchalant reply every so often but was more devoted to Peggy's cat and watching Buddy the Elf fall off a Christmas tree. That part made him snort laughing every single time.

Then Alex feels the bag of chips ripped out of his hand and his phone torn away. Alex's eyes are wide and he's looking over towards John.

"I'm talking to you" John hisses. "God, you're rude."

Alex finishes chewing and swallowing, he's wiping dorito dust from his mouth as he does. "What?" Alex asked.

"I was asking about your parents, you said they're inviting us over and I wanted to know what to get them." John growled. "I thought it would be nice. Since, you know, I'm your new boyfriend and all. I don't want to come across as rude when stepping into their home." John spat. "I really just, wish, you'd listen to me."

"I am!" Alex blabbed. "I was!" John's face said otherwise. He rolled his eyes at Alex and angrily tossed his phone back at him into his lap harshly. Alex flinched from it.

"John, don't start." Alex sighs. He's rubbing at his lap where his phone landed.

This was ridiculous.

John scoffed. He had the nerve to sound offended. "Don't start, what?"

"Your little bitch fits!" Alex hissed back, he leans back on the sofa and went back to the TV. Mostly just to piss John off. John narrows his eyes when Alex does. He's clearing pushing him.

"I'm sorry, okay. I'm sorry for not listening, alright? It's nice that you're thinking of my parents. Baby, I appreciate it. Thank you."

Alex hoped this wouldn't turn into an argument. They had been so good up until now. John still looks fairly miffed there beside him, he's staring at the TV and then back to his sketchbook before he continued on drawing.

Alex rolled his eyes to himself, he looks over to John again and he puts a hand on John's pyjama-clad thigh. Mostly in the hopes it'd cheer John up.

"They'll love you with or without a gift, John. I love you, I think you're amazing. They will too."
Alex says brightly. He squeezes John's thigh. John grumbled an 'mm'. Alex bit the inside of his lip, he was trying here. So hard. Alex hated John's stubbornness. "We can pick something up tomorrow, since you really want to."

John drops his pencil. "You know, it would've been nice if you told them about us."

"I want to do it in person" Alex rebuffed. He closes his eyes for a moment. "I've told you this"

Then John darted his eyes to Alex. Glaring. "Yeah, you did. But I'm practically a stranger! And if you were that excited about us, you would've just told them. Most other people do when they get a new partner. Are you ashamed of me?" John threw in.

Alex's eyes sprang back open and he's turning to John, budging up to him closer and he's livid. "My dad already knows who you are! -"

"Your mother doesn't!" John threw in over him.

"Why the fuck would I be - John! Are you serious? Oh my god. Oh my fucking, god." Alex chanted. "You're hard work, baby, you really are."

Alex put a hand over his face, it's sliding down in frustration. John really did chat some shit.

"I mean, you hid that you and this Eliza, were together too! You never thought to tell me about her!" John shoved Alex's hand off his thing. Alex looked hurt when John did so, flicking his hand away like it's vermin.

"But no, you just sit there, stuffing your face. I mean, the hell. We ate dinner almost an hour ago. Why are you always hungry?!" John snapped. "You're already growing side-ways by the day!"

Alex look as if he had just been slapped.

He had not expected that.

So his weight was a problem. Alex knew it was silly to let it get to him but it did.

"Every time I look at you, you're always chewing. Fucking stop." John hissed. Alex's was just sat there listening to it all, numb, silent. "Yet I put up with it, you're lucky I do!" John rasped. Alex is still shell-shocked by John's comments. Alex didn't know what to say. He knew John was right about his eating habits.
"But When we're speaking, we have to listen to each other. So don't ignore me! I never ignore you, do I?" John just kept piling it on top. Alex was hurting inside as he did. The more John pushed him, the more a weight added on top.

This was such a mess.

Alex can feel his throat close up.

John tilts his his head as he rests his elbow against the arm of the sofa. He's propping up the side of his face into his palm as he does. Still continuing to glare coldly at Alex. "You know, Alexander, it makes me wonder what else you're hiding."

At that Alex just breaks.

"I'm not!" Alex spat out defensively. "I promise -"

John didn't look as if he believed him.

It only annoyed Alex further though. All that anger, stress and everything. The truth was bubbling in his gut. Brewing rapidly and that was when Alex found he couldn't keep it locked in any longer. He had to just tell John everything.

"I'll bet" John added bitterly.

"John, I swear to you. I am not ashamed of you, I love you, dammit." Alex stresses. "I just wanted to tell my folks in person! I wanted it to be a fucking surprise, it's been a year - okay!" Alex cried.

John was scowling.

"For what, exactly?" John spat.

"Since me and Eliza broke up, alright. I've been miserable ever since, I put on three stone in weight, I drink too much, I stopped caring about myself, I was miserable after we lost our child! -"

Now this caught John's attention. His eyes grew wide. "You lost - wait, what? Hold on." John
stammered and he's holding a hand up.

But Alex kept carrying on. "She had a miscarriage! Everything fell apart, we couldn't keep our relationship going. It went to shit. All of it." Alex exasperated.

He felt his voice go all croaky and John looked somewhat moved by Alex's plight.

"Since then - I've just been a wreck. A mess, until I met you." Alex said. "You made everything better."

"And I just thought, by keeping Eliza a secret would just stop the pain, all the fucking feelings I had and that by having my folks, finally meet you. It would be nice. To show them, I've moved on and that I did find happiness again. But mostly because you're amazing. I want them to see that in person. Alright?" Alex ended breathlessly.

John was sizing him up. He frowns for a moment and Alex watched as John's mouth twisted - he was thinking. However it seemed as if John had only heard one word come out of Alex's mouth.

"You both had a miscarriage?"

John unravelled himself there from leaning on the sofa's arm. He sits up and John looked sympathetic. He's lost for words it seemed. Alex moves closer to him and he takes one of John's hand.

"I just... wasn't sure how to tell you." Alex murmured. John's eyes softened at Alex's words. "I was scared it would push you away, I always try and push what happened, to the back of my mind. It was just so painful, honey."

Now it was John's turn to grasp Alex because John was flinging his arms around him. He cradled Alex there, John places a soft kiss on the crook of Alex's neck when he does. "Alexander, it's okay."

He adds another kiss on Alex's neck. Then another, John is trying to probably drift Alex away into a sea of bliss but Alex remained on rambling his feelings.

"Me and Eliza, we really wanted the baby." Alex said softly. He hugs John back, though, not as tightly. Alex still found himself annoyed with John deep down. "Maybe me more than her."

Then John pulls back slowly, he's staring Alex in the eyes, his own narrowing. "Why would you think that?"

Alex shrugs. "Probably because I had a shitty childhood, grew up in the system when my real mom died, my dad walked out when I was a baby, I remember the faces of so many kids I grew up with. Alone, unloved." Alex sighs and rests his head on John's shoulder. "I wanted to be a dad, badly. That made it hurt more I guess."

John heaves a small breath and he's pulling Alex into his chest then laying down backwards there on the sofa. Alex lay there on his chest, while John tousled Alex's scalp there in his loose bun.

"You could've told me, you know." John said to him. "It wouldn't have pushed me away, Alexander. I mean, you know everything about me. Right?" Alex nodded into John. Well, Alex supposedly knew a handful about John.
But not everything.

There was more to John, Alex just knew it. Sam, the relationship with his mother Eleanor, John being taken out of school, his broken relationship with his brothers, Charles Lee's wrath and the hate page. There had to be.

"And now, you know, all about me." Alex added softly.

John's soothing touches were lulling Alex to sleep nearly. "Yeah, I do. But I want you to know, I think you'd've made an amazing father." John told Alex and he leans down, presses a kiss on the side of Alex's head.

"It's like they say, everything happens for a reason. And who's to say, maybe, you'll get to be a father again one day."

Alex cleared his throat and sniffled out, "You think so?"

John nodded, a gleam in his eye. He plants another kiss on Alex's head. "You will" John tells him, sweetly, quietly. "I promise"

Right then, Alex slowly looks up at John, who is staring down lovingly at him.

"I guess..." Alex says, a little too sadly. His emotions were all over the place tonight. "But, when you're expecting a child. It unlocks this kind of love you didn't know your heart was missing, I know that sounds sappy as shit. It does though!" Alex explained. The soft soothing on Alex's scalp went slower and Alex could feel John deflate with a long sigh under him.

"It doesn't really cover up the loss of a child you've lost though."

That pain never really went away.

Then John made a 'hm' in agreement and he's brushing a lock of hair around Alex's ear. "That's true. But either way, Alexander. You've got to deal with the fact that your child is gone. It's dead Alexander." John says to him sternly.

"When you're dead, you're gone. Forever."
The way John said it made Alex's stomach tie in knots and his heart shred in ribbons. It was true, his and Eliza's baby was gone.

"You need to move on and go forth." John went quiet then.

"Understood?"

Alex nodded. Yeah, he understood, alright.

"Jack" Alex called softly after a few minutes had passed. The sound of the TV filling in the silence between them.

Quietly John said, "What?"

"Do you think there is a heaven, up there?" Alex asked him as he's turning on his front and staring up at John as he's lay on him. John looked at Alex and he pulls a strange face and he chuckled. "No, seriously. Do you believe in heaven? Not like, angels, halos and all that shit. But something more?"

John twirls a lock of Alex's hair around his finger. He tugs it softly and remained staring at Alex. "Alexander" John said to him, his voice lowering. "You really need to get over it."

Oh.

Alex gives John a subtle nod and lies back down. "Guess you're right"

John was right. Alex knew he had to.

"I am" John said. "Anyway, enough of that for now. Calm down." Alex was spiralling into a hole of sadness, he wasn't really taking in what John was saying to him and went along with whatever it was John was wanting to do that night.

When they're in bed, tucked up together, John resting at the back of him and Alex can feel John's soft breaths tickle the nape of his neck. All Alex can do is think of Eliza and that time she was carrying their baby.
Perhaps she was struggling to move on still. They never really spoke about it. Not anymore, it was buried in the dust. In a giant memory box that had lost its key.

As Alex is about to drift off - Eliza still on his mind. Alex feels John press up a sweet kiss on the back of his neck there. It tingles when he does.

"See you in your dreams" John whispered softly into his Alex's and adds one last remaining kiss on his lobe.

That night Alex didn't sleep a wink.

Chapter End Notes

The French Alex uses:
* I do not know what to say but I think you are beautiful

What have I done to John Laurens?

Oh god, he's so horrible. But so cute! I mean c'mon though. Shame he's just so mean!
Poor
Alex. It doesn't get any better either...

Thank you so much for all your support and kudos! It means a lot to me! <3

I have tumblr now: http://littlepinkphoenix.tumblr.com

So please follow if you fancy a chat or just to find random Hamlimemes!

XO
The next morning Alex tossed over and he's wiping at his eyes.

He barely slept at all. Not that John's clinging to him kept him awake, John always clung on to him or nuzzled into him as they slept. Alex was used to it now. But the most sleep he probably had was three hours. He's sitting up, blurry-eyed looking around for John.

John wasn't in the room.

Alex debated on laying back down and going back to sleep but once Alex picked up his phone off his stand, it was already ten. He didn't want to sleep the day away and be up all night again. So Alex is hoisting the covers from himself, he slips his boxers and t-shirt back on. Sleeping nude had definitely become the norm between them now. It was just easier incase they wanted to mess around.

Right now, he's getting up, groggily stretching then scratching both his ass and messy hair. Alex grabs the hair-tie off his wrist and tosses it up in a quick bun. That's when Alex bounds for the front room, it's nice to walk in and be greeted by blaring Christmas decorations. It looked homely, cosy.

To know someone else was living with him too and being able to share Christmas with another, rather than by himself, like last year.

Alex yawns and he spots John sat on the sofa, re-runs were playing on the TV and for once, John wasn't drawing. He hadn't even noticed Alex enter the room either. So Alex heads over to him in the hopes that John was in a better mood since last night he exploded again. Alex goes over behind John, he's leaning on the back of the sofa and surprises John with a peck on the cheek.

"Morning you" Alex cooed softly.

John tilts his head up and he smiled gently at him. "I heard you come in" He says.

Alex chuckled. "Guess I'll have to be sneakier next time"

"Mm, you will. I have the hearing of a hawk." John smirked and he's putting a hand on Alex's chin, bringing him down for a proper kiss on the lips. The morning breath wasn't all that bad between them.

Then John is turning back around again and said, "I thought you would be up earlier, usually you're
awake before me."

At this Alex chuckled and he's gone around the sofa to go sit next to his boyfriend. As Alex plonked down there, he's grabbing the remote to flick something else on. "Well, I wasn't up half way in the night like I usually am this time. I managed to grab some sleep." If three or four hours counted though. Alex didn't want to tell John the actual truth as to why he couldn't sleep. Eliza on his mind again.

John quirks a brow. "What do you mean?"

"For the past two nights in a row, I've been sat on the toilet at three in the morning, trying to drain out cum from my ass." Alex spat, then he has John giving him a mighty nudge in his side and scolds him.

Then Alex snorts with his arms out dramatically. "What?! I'm only telling you the truth!"

Although John may have sounded disgusted, he was infact grinning smugly beside Alex. "Suppose you are"

Then John turns back to whatever he was doing. That was when Alex notices what John is devoting his attention to. He had hold of Alex's macbook there in his lap.

"You're on my laptop?" Alex asked.

John shrugged like it was no biggie. "Yeah, it was just here and I wanted to go online." Then John looked back up to Alex and he's holding his gaze, firmly.

"It's okay, right?"

Although Alex didn't want to say it, truthfully, it wasn't. His laptop held so much personal information, all his bank account passwords were saved there, invoices, his stories were saved on it, private messages between friends.

Everything was automatically logged in too, Alex prayed to god that John had not been on his Facebook. Alex hadn't deleted the messages between him and Sam yet.

But Alex acted cool. "Yeah, sure, sure baby."

He caught that lingering stance John held with him too before turning back to the screen.

"Just, uh, be careful of my files. Please. All my work is on there." Alex tells John, it was saved to his dropbox anyway but still. Alex liked to keep his work in order.

With a brief nod of the head, John continued pattering on the keyboard. Alex glanced at the screen and he asks, "What're you looking at anyway?"

And John blurts out with, "Colleges, I've decided to make an early start on things. Also -" John adds with a mighty grin and he looks over at Alex. As he did, John clasps Alex's thigh excitedly.
"I've looked at some apartments too and started contacting landlords for deeds. I want to start some viewings."

Apartments.

Alex's face was a picture.

"What do you mean apartments? Wait, you're moving up here?" Alex blabbered.

This was all too soon, it wasn't even Christmas day yet. It hadn't even been five months or six of the duration Alex was supposed to be minding John in Eleanor's care. Now John was committed to looking for places to live.

Alex knew John said he had his intentions on doing so but not right now.

"Yeah, I told you." John says with a roll of the eyes. "I want to go ahead with it all, like you said. Remember? You told me, I could do anything. So I want to go to college, live up here with you. Fresh start, just like you said." John sounded so certain.

Alex nodded along. It was true, he had said that. But with him looking half-asleep still, Alex didn't appear the most enthusiastic which seemed to rub John up the wrong way. John turns from him, removes the hand off Alex and he's sulkily slumping down the sofa as he typed.

"I can't wait" Alex said quickly.

John's eyes drift over to him and Alex smiled at him. Then John did back.

"We can move in together, somewhere new." Alex suggested. Maybe it was time for him to get a new place, this one held too many memories anyway. Far too many. "I can't say it'll be easier in terms of rent baby, but we can-"

Then John scrunched up his face at him. "What do you mean by 'rent'?" And John giggled at Alex like he was silly. Alex looked dumbfounded.

"I'm not renting," John says to him. "I'm buying, why would I rent?"

Alex couldn't believe it. It was amazing how John seemed to have no clue on money whatsoever. His eyes fell out of his head though.

"Have you seen the prices of apartments to buy outright in Manhattan?" Alex almost gasped out. "Baby!"

But John waved him off like it was nothing. "Yeah, I have and I don't care. As long as we're together, does it matter? It's just money. Alexander, stop worrying. I've already done research. A shit ton while you were asleep." John sighs and drearily rolls his eyes away from Alex. "I'm not a little kid."

I know that! But John, c'mon, you've never bought property before!" Alex complained. "You would be buying four walls! Why not just get a house in the future up here, if you're that intent on
Just as Alex says that John is grinning cheekily and shoots him a look. "Oh, you want me to get us a house now?"

"Don't push it" Alex shot back. "For now, concentrate on actually getting into college before rationally picking out lavish apartments."

John looked like he really didn't care though. He was biting his bottom lip grinning away. That's when he holds up a bank card, whipped right out of the pocket of his sweats. Alex frowns, he didn't get it.

"I've practically inherited everything in my father's name. First born, first served." John said smugly. Alex rolled his eyes as he leans back there and crossed his arms.

Imagine having such a carefree future, no worry about money or anything. Alex thought of his upbringing, not a brown bean in his name growing up and everything he'd had in homes before he met the Washington's had been second-hand.

How he had been jeered and laughed at during school for his old clothes, never being able to go anywhere because he had no money or never receiving many presents during birthdays or christmas when he was in care. John - he had probably been given the lot. Toys, clothes, food, warmth, a good education. Set for life.

Then John lets out a mighty huff under his breath.

"Besides, that bastard owes me," John all but whispered and he's gone by to flickering down some pages online. "Big time"

Alex almost winced just cold John sounded. He knew that John despised his father not far short but still. He's shaking his head as John rambled on. Alex fixated his attention on the TV and to Home Alone which was just starting.

"And put it this way, even if you never make it as a best selling author -" John added nonchalantly. Alex bares John daggers at that. "I'll be here to look after you. Like I've said before, no stress." John puts back his hand on Alex's thigh and he slides it upwards, it stays put just at the base of Alex's groin. "I'll take care of us."

John was such a dreamer. It was precious really. Rather than try to convince John that buying property right away after not even being in the city five minutes was ridiculous or persuade him further, Alex just smiles back and pops his hand on top of John's there. Despite not really wanting to, Alex allowed that jarring comment to wash over him.

"Aren't you just the sweetest," Alex laughed. "If anything, I really should be supporting you. I'm almost thirty, for gods sake Jack."

At that John snorted with, "It's 2018 Alexander," He said. "It doesn't matter if you're older than me. I'm the one with the money, that's all that matters, really." Alex's stomach dropped. John was right, it was all about money.

Even though Alex had more money now, given by John's mother, than he's ever made in his lifetime. John was the real winner here though. Spoilt from birth and secured until his death.
Alex knew he shouldn't be envious of his other half but he was. He was an independent fully grown man. Alex always had been, he hadn't had any choice but to be as he grew up.

Only now did he feel weakened for the first time ever in his life. Sure, Eliza had come from money but it wasn't anything like John's background. Between John and his friend Lafayette, the pair of them were pampered petty little princes.

John was staring right at Alex. He tilts his head a little and gives him a softer smile this time. Squeezes Alex's inner thigh. Although it was supposed to be loving, Alex felt infantilised more than anything. Alex slumps his shoulders as he's turning back to John. Unsure of what to really say.

"Listen, after the lives we've had, we deserve better." John started quietly. Alex's mouth twists in thought. "Alexander, you've been through so much. Your mother, she's dead, your father left you -" John adds. Alex's stomach churned. "You were in care, you got stuck with the Washingtons -"

Then Alex tried to chip in there but John talks over him quickly. He squeezes Alex again. Alex huffed at not being able to have a chance to talk and John's eyes harden on him for throwing a silent fit. He continued anyway whether Alex liked it or not.

"Your dream of getting into law school, gone. Then there is your ex-girlfriend, this Eliza." John tried, oh he tries not to sound like it bothered him. Alex can hear that bit of venom in his voice though. "She left you, after she lost your child."

Alex runs a hand over his shaggy hair and he's turning back to the TV for a minute. The way John had to list everything bad that had happened in his life. It felt overbearing for a split second.

"I know, that, you're struggling to make ends meet too -" John had to toss in. "So just for once, Alexander, let me be a part of the narrative, allow someone else give something back to you, that's positive. We can both, have a happy ending." John sounded so confident in his words.

Alex's eyes drift back to him and John looked sure of himself, it was right there in his wide hazel eyes.

"I promise."

As usual, Alex gives in. He grasps John's hand and Alex is tugging John closer for a kiss. John clasps a hand on Alex's cheek and kisses him again.

He knew Alex was thankful after that.

"Just one more thing" Alex said, his voice grew quieter. John tilts his head slightly in question.

Alex contemplated on asking this but he had to. For both their sake and a future without anymore
outbursts at one another. Also to save John from hitting an artery if they ever do get hitched or get a place together. Alex needed John to be stable and happy mentally.

John looked at him waiting. Almost daringly in a way, Alex could see it in his eyes and he forced himself to ask it.

"You promised me you would get counselling too, right?"

John stared at him point blank in the eyes, Alex couldn't really read his expression.

It was blank, void.

Then John smiled and nodded.

"Yeah, yeah. Sure." He said.

Regardless of John's little smile and the quick kiss on his cheek. Alex wasn't certain John meant it. But Alex would remind him anyway in the future.

Still he knew, John didn't mean it and that worried him deeply.

Later that afternoon Alex had been on and off the phone with one of his agencies. They were calling to ask him to send a manuscript over and his editor was on his case even though it was nearly Christmas. Alex didn't say he was busy with John over and lied about having writers block. There were just some plans to discuss and Alex was marking them all down in his journal. Things that had to be done within the new year.

Alex was so happy when they asked him to do a signing and to come talk at a charity event. This would all be happening in after January. Alex loved being part of events, he had done it before but this time it was mostly him they would be throwing the spotlight on. He's so happy, grinning from ear to ear and he's doing a mid-air fist pump shouting "I'm so down!" aloud.

John is watching Alex from the sofa where he's sat typing up his application. Alex isn't on the phone for too much longer and when he gets off, immediately Alex bounds to John and he's squealing about what will be happening, all the details and who'll be there.

However even though John is smiling back, he asked when it was and Alex gives John the date.

"That's when you're almost done with me, right" John mutters. The end of February was the month when Alex's contract with the Laurens ended. He was only doing six months after all.

Alex nodded and he's fumbling with his phone there in his hand. "Yeah but it's a big thing for me! Baby, I'm getting my work out there. It's such a good opportunity!" Alex beamed. "I can't wait! Fuck, fuck, fuck!"

John went silent for a second or two then he simply smiled and went back to writing. "Congratulations" John said almost bitterly.
The large smile on Alex's face withered ever so and the light in his eyes was washed out. If only John could've at least sounded happy for him. John must've sensed the dip in Alex's mood because he's looking back up at him. John put the laptop aside, he's standing up from his spot off the sofa and as soon as he does, John pulls Alex into a big hug.

"I'm happy for you, Alex." John whispers, Alex's heart bounded and leaped. John rarely ever said his nick-name. When he did, it held meaning. "Well done"

As graceful as John was with his words, the flicker of his pencil or delicacy with his paintbrush, so was his kiss. It was only chaste, supple and sweet. Alex melts into it and he's breaking it, staring into John's eyes.

"For celebration, we best start early then." John purred. Alex arched up a brow.

"John?"

Then John chuckled out with, "I've got us a table, downtown tonight. I sorted it all out when you were asleep." So that explained what John had been up to. Alex hummed in approval, this was exciting. It had been ages since he had been out on a true, real, date. Even though John and him went out to eat a lot, this was a nice surprise. "I told you I was taking you out. But now, oh, what a better reason to celebrate."

Alex is grinning devilishly when he's moving in for another kiss, "Thank -" Then another. "You" He managed out. As this happened, Alex drifted his hands along John's sides and crept them to the backside of his sweats. Sneakily he was trying to dip his hands just under their elastic. But John shimmed out of his grasp with a cheeky smile.

"Nuh-uh" John said teasingly. "Later" And he's lightly flicking Alex's nose.

So later it was then.

They got ready at around half six and had to be at this restaurant for ten to eight. Alex thought he looked nice enough, he felt really good. Being able to go out with John for a meal he was being treated to and having the opportunity to get his name out more in the next few months. It was all great. He couldn't stop smiling to himself.

Alex was straightening out his white shirt, tucking it in more in his jeans and he went over to the mirror to just quickly sort out his hair into its usual bun. That was before John came stumbling into the room, he's still got his towel around his waist from his shower. John gives his curls a quick dry with a spare t-shirt on the bed and he's watching Alex do his hair there. Alex pays John no mind and John is telling Alex to change his jeans for another pair. As picky as it was, Alex did, he swapped his denim blue ones for his black and left it at that.

When John was ready he came into the living room, Alex was sat on the sofa tapping away on his phone. He had so many emails to reply to. John looked unexceptionally nice. A nice top, a jacket and some jeans. He smelt amazing too. Coconuts and pineapples.

Irresistible.
With the Google map app, a couple of asked directions, they ended up at the restaurant and it was gorgeous. As soon as they got there Alex's eyes lit up and John's face was a picture of joy seeing Alex this delighted.

They did all sorts there but the interior was divine, modern and fresh. The place was bustling with tons of people, a live band was playing elsewhere. Alex was surprised John would pick a place like this still it was nice. John had remembered Alex saying how he was into his live music and such. Alex appreciated it. The food was amazing, Alex sang along to John when tunes he knew popped off, John was bright and smiling. Everything was good.

After a few drinks once they'd eaten, John paid the bill and they went for a little walk before heading back home.

Alex took John's hand when they hit the main street. It was absolutely freezing but they toasted each other up quick enough. The heat pulsing through John's hand sent sparks up Alex's spine. That wasn't just from his body heat either. The small glances they gave each other as they chatted. John's dimpled smile, how he made Alex laugh with the stuff he came out with.

Alex felt himself sway. Butterflies brimmed in his tummy.

When they got back to the apartment the first thing Alex did was flip on the thermostat.

The Christmas tree was blinking away there in the darkness, the fairy lights were still on glittering away, while the room still smelt like gingerbread and vanilla from this candle John had on burning earlier before. John put on the hallway light at least as they got off their jackets and shoes in the door way.

After hanging his jacket up, Alex headed into the living room first with a small stretch, while he's humming one of the tunes from the restaurant. He's too far gone in his own little world to notice John behind him there. Alex feels a pair of chilly hands swarm around his waist.

"Alex" John whispered against the back of his neck. "Want you, right now."

As did Alex. So he's turning ever so, slowly and Alex's eyes reach John's there in the dark. Alex beamed at John before taking hold of his cheeks and bringing him into a deep kiss. John kissed Alex back and from then their evening took yet another turn.

The only sounds in Alex's apartment were the ticking of the clock on the wall and the ever present hum of the city, wicking in through the window.

Alex felt John's head bow behind his. Hot breath caressed the bare skin of his collarbone.

"Alexander…” John laid another trail of kisses up the side of his neck. Teeth gently closed on an earlobe and gave a light tug. At the same time, his hand on Alex's soft tummy slid up, it began to trace the disc of a nipple.

The sensation of these actions started a deep pulse beating in Alex’s groin; he could feel his balls start to throb. They had already done it this evening. Well, they did most evenings. Tonight felt
quite different though. Almost as if a new chapter had been opened for the pair of them.

But whatever was opening up for the, Alex was completely sure of, however, was that he didn't want John to stop.

John's mouth moved again, and a whispered plea brushed into Alex's ear.

"Can we make love again?"

It was as if Alex was a puppet pulled by unseen strings, his head slowly turned, his cheek grazed John's lips in its motion. After a moment, he nodded.

As soon as he'd given this acquiescence, Alex felt arms pull and turn him. Then found himself facing John there in bed. John not completely on top of him since they were on their sides. But John was leant over him, Alex there on the mattress, looking up at John all hazy-eyed.

John was already raking his hands along Alex's side, one arm supporting him as he held himself over Alex and the other was finding it's way to Alex's cock. When he grabbed it, John toyed and played with it. Then he's leaning down, taking Alex's mouth in his own and their tongues swirled. Alex moaned into the mouth that held him.

Then that hand let go of Alex's cock and it's gone to the back of Alex's hair. His hair was sprawled out, his hair-tie long abandoned. John did this to pull Alex's head back, breaking their kiss. Then John lowered his mouth, placing a series of nipping kisses along the edge of Alex's shave-fresh jaw. Moving down his long throat, John tasted bitter traces of soap and shaving cream. Lifting his head, he licked Alex's cheek, cleansing his palate completely.

After a long heated session of passion, a good-raw-dog of fucking, from Alex underneath John plunging into him over and over. The sparks of pure bliss bursting through his body, the redness of his ears and swollen lips to the soreness of Alex's finger tips from gripping the bed sheets too harshly. They were done. Alex could feel John's aftermath still in him, it was spilling out on the sheets and sweat was beaded on his forehead, strands of his hair clung to it.

John heavily panting above him and he's collapsing back down there at the side of Alex, both of them heaving together. John rests his head on Alex's shoulder, he's closing his eyes and just basking in his orgasm. Alex was pretty sure his insides were going to fall out if they were to have another session like this. As great as the sex was, John wore him out.

"Holy shit" Alex said breathily.

They were both heaving.

"Fuck" went Alex.

John chuckled in response. He's looking at Alex there, half wide-eyed and yet still hazily at the same time. Clearly pleased he could do this to Alex, make him feel this good and have this power over him.

"Feel good, hm?" John giggled. Alex only nodded, he's too lost for words.

"Must be, you can't even answer me. That's a first." John said cheekily. Alex gives him a light swat on his back.

They both spurted into a fit of giggles. Alex reaches tiredly for John and ends up draping his
fingers through John's curly mane. Such pretty curls he had. "You're really beautiful" Alex murmured. John was, he really was. John is darting his gaze to him and his smile grows, he laughs lightly and mooches closer to Alex.

"Sucker for that sweet talk" John giggled.

Alex went back to resting with his eyes closed, when he realized that John too had stilled.

"Jack" he whispered.

"Hmmmmm?"

"Thank you" Alex said.

"Tonight was amazing, I've had the best time in such a long time. Also, I'm really happy to see you happier."

He could feel John shift ever so beside him.

"Since you've been in New York, you've changed. A lot and that's a good thing" Alex says softly. He's still toying with John's curls. "I'm glad, baby. If this is what being away from that house is doing for you, I can't wait for you to move up here then." John's mouth is agape and Alex's slowly re-opening his eyes, looking to John. John is half sat up beside him, hovering over him.

"You mean that?" John asks.

Alex nods. "Yeah, I do. The change will be amazing for you. No matter what happens to us, I just want you to be a happy man." He's smiles softly at John and John does back but it's not as lively as Alex's. It was dark and Alex couldn't really see the corners of John's eyes narrow that tiny bit.

John goes silent for a second.

It starts to grate on Alex.

"Jack?"

Then John shakes his head, his smile grows again and then John tentatively leaned in and took Alex's lips between his in a way that was infinitely tender. Alex raised his hand to gently cup John's cheek. No sooner had John pulled back ending the kiss, than Alex leaned in seeking another. The kiss was long, soft and supple this time.

After he broke their second kiss, John studied Alex for a moment again. Then a slight look of concern came over his handsome face. "Alexander" John says quietly.
John then paused in the midst and added a whisper of, "Nothing will happen to us, I promised you, didn't I? I'll tell you now, right now, Alexander. We will be happy."

Alex smiled at this. John brushed a sweaty lock back from Alex's forehead. Then he moved in and once again caught Alex's mouth. Then leaves Alex almost in a dream when he pulls back.

"I swear it"

Then John added a delicate kiss at the corner of Alex's eye.

He softly shifts a strand from Alex's ear and whispers into it, "I'll try and be gentle."

Alex's brow knitted and before he could ask about what John meant. John was already kissing at Alex's neck, working his way down from his ear and he's playfully nipping along side. Alex moaned from the contact, he enjoyed it. The small peppering of kisses and naughty nips got Alex off completely. He could feel his cock twitch.

John's moving properly on top of Alex now, straddling him and he's leant down with a hand to hold Alex's head in one place, not too roughly but firmly. Enough to show dominance at least. Alex's eyes sprang open wide.

Then John's other hand was to pin one of Alex's wrist down. Well, John had him tied down by the wrist and this instantly created silent alarm within Alex.

As he's kissing Alex's neck, the grazing of his teeth becomes rougher and it goes from lightly biting to proper biting. Alex winces when he can feel John suck at one area of his neck, Alex is fighting a battle of pleasure since that part always made him feel heavenly.

Honestly he didn't like the hold John had him in though. Alex had never once felt fear with John but the way John was acting, like a rabid animal and it didn't feel loving or playful. It felt angry.

Alex rolling his eyes back but at the same time when he's feeling John's teeth sink into him, hard. Alex is certain John's broke his skin

"John!" Alex gasped. "Fuck - ouch!"

John's teeth bared in him harder this time. He can feel John's teeth seeping right through his neck, pain shooting right around his body and the area the teeth were in was screaming. Alex was certain he could hear John growl something but he didn't hear properly what it was.

"John!"
Alex wincing and mewling in pain.

"Fuck" Alex mutters out.

"J-John!"

He doesn't listen and Alex is worming in his grasp there. His face a picture of pain. He can feel his eye sting with tears.

"Stop!"

Then John stops right away, he's pulling off that spot and he's pressing a kiss on Alex to shut him up for saying whatever it was he was about to say. Then he's breaking away smiling cheekily. Alex was frowning at him.

"Sorry" John rasped. He chuckled lightly and he's kissing Alex's cheek. "Got carried away..."

"Have you lost your fucking mind?!!" Alex snapped.

John's brow raised and he's cockily smirking still. "I wasn't doing it that hard" John said, he's trying to make light of it. Alex isn't having it though. "I just wanted to make you feel good..."

"You were fucking mauling me!" Alex hissed. He's breaking out of John's grip this time, John releases Alex and sits up from him. "I bet I'm fucking bleeding - what the hell John?! Why would you do that!"

With a pout John tries to go in to hold Alex, but Alex is pushing him away and sitting up. John snarls at Alex, he didn't take rejection too well it seemed.

"I was just... I didn't do it that hard!" John hisses back.

"Look Alex" But Alex isn't moved by his plea and that nickname usage wasn't going to work. Alex is clasping his hand over the bitten area and he's grimacing as he does. "Sorry, okay. Sorry."

With a false sympathetic smile John nuzzled into the crook of Alex's neck. "I'm sorry" John
laughed playfully and he's gone back to leaning his head not the crook of Alex's neck. "I'll stop with the biting"

Then Alex is shifting away, giving John a shove on the shoulder and John is stumbling backwards there beside him. He's nearly falling off the bed.

"You'll stop altogether" Alex shoots. He's swinging his legs over the side of the bed, wincing from his sore bitten neck and he's about to pull himself up off the bed. John's staring at Alex with a sharpness which Alex doesn't see since his back is turned. Before Alex can make a move, a hand grips his upper arm and Alex is being dragged back. "What the fuck -"

John doesn't listen to him though. He's stabbing his nails into Alex as he does too, obviously annoyed that he's trying to push him away. Alex growls as John did this and he's trying to pry John off. It doesn't work though.

"John!"

When John pulls Alex backwards and he's laughing as he does. "Oh, stop being a mood" John said carelessly. "C'mere"

Alex huffily says, "You're pissing me off, no!" and John takes offence.

"I said come here" John hissed. Then laughed as he did. "Get here, now. Alex, come on. Please. Fuck."

Although Alex didn't really find it funny. He rolls his eyes to himself, John didn't sound sorry in the least and the area where he had been bitten was tingling. He hoped he wasn't bleeding. Alex complied since he didn't have much choice and if he pushed John away altogether, John would only be in a mood with him. So Alex just went with it and got back into bed.

"Just don't do that again" Alex mutters.

But John is still smiling away like it's a joke and he's got his arms out to Alex. "It wasn't that hard! You're getting worked up over nothing!"

Alex scoffed and said, "You were practically chewing my neck off!" John rolls his eyes there in the dark. "The fuck!"

With a small heave, John held up his hands defensively. "Fine, fine. I get it."

He didn't sound one bit forgiving though. Alex's stomach churned and he was so wound up. He couldn't believe how carefree and unbothered John was about it. He had just hurt him, horribly too.

"Never do that again, hear me?" Alex exasperated. "John" He added when John didn't answer quick enough.

"Right, Alex." John sighs. "Right, okay."

Alex shakes his head. "I swear... you just don't sound one bit fucking bothered." Then John is
moving closer to Alex.

"I am, I didn't mean to hurt you." John sighs at him again, he's tucking a hair behind Alex's ear and hates how Alex coldly shifts away or tries to when he does. "Fine, I won't if it gets you like this. I won't do it again. But I never did it that hard Alexander." John says. "I'm sorry, alright?"

Alex lies back down and so did John.

As Alex went out to touch it John was already back on it, Alex reluctantly lets John back near him when he does. "I'll kiss it all better" John said. "That okay?"

Alex nodded. He doesn't really want John doing anything to him again for the rest of the night. But he went with it, like he always did.

With the licking and lapping up the spot before John gone back to sucking it. Gently this time. It still hurt whenever John did suck but Alex felt himself relax and he's closing his eyes. Just wishing and wanting the whole ordeal to be over with.

Not too long after, John pulled away and was slightly disappointed when he saw that Alex had fallen asleep.

Or at least, he pretended to be.

The next morning Alex was short with him and John eventually got tired of Alex being weird with him. He told Alex to get over what happened and said he was sorry for the umpteenth time apparently.

What annoyed Alex is that John never sounded sorry. It was as if John could never do no wrong, despite Alex protesting and saying he hurt him. They had this conversation over burnt toast since Alex left them in longer than he had realised, that was his fault too apparently.

Burning the fucking toast.

In the end John ignored him for the rest of the morning until eventually Alex came to John and asked if they could make up. So they did. A quick kiss and loving hug, things were back to normal. John bathed and rubbed some cream on Alex's bite mark, it was ugly and bruised there just at his collarbone. He promised Alex he would never do that again to him or hurt him. Alex forgave him. Then they spoke about their date night and some of the things they had seen, heard, just to keep the peace.

But Alex could still tell John was secretly grilling over their argument. Even when they made up, John still had an attitude or the way he looked at Alex like he was a disappointment or making him feel like shit. Alex said nothing about it though. He didn't want another argument, not now.

Christmas wasn't long off.

He had yet to invite John to his parents and bring John to Herc's party. He needed things to be good with John, Alex didn't want an awkward time with John and people asking why they were
fighting.

So in order to calm John down Alex decided to go for a walk together.

Well, they mostly needed to pick up some milk and coffee from the corner store.

But Alex recommended they needed a good, long, stroll to clear their minds.

After a quick visit to the store Alex stirred them in a different direction, one of the big parks within his area. John frowned and asked where they were heading. Alex told John to be patient.

The icy winds were picking up again, it was a week until Christmas. It felt crazy just how fast it had passed their time together. But Alex had no regrets, no matter what happened last night. They were a couple, couples argued and fought all the time. This caretaking job was the best thing he had ever done. This year he was able to meet John, their lonesome hearts both welded together and Alex hoped that there would be many more years to come with one another after New Year.

John was always amazed by the sights of the city though. He was constantly looking around the tall buildings, wandering off to signs or whatever caught his eye. Alex would just laugh to himself at John's curiosity. They were entering the park, there weren't as many people around, preferably handful at most. It was a good long walk to cut through it though. They were surrounded by a concave of trees, high up, bare and beautiful against the pale grey sky.

Alex wondered if it would be okay to share something precious with John. Despite what happened last night though. Alex's heart was brimming with love and he felt like it was okay right, John knew about this too. Bring them closer together, make things okay.

As they're continuing down the pathway, grovel shovelling under their boots, crunching under each step as it fills the silence among with the near by sirens. Alex looked to John over his shoulder and smiled. John notices and he looks to Alex.

With a small nudge, Alex says, "Hey, I want to show you something"

With that John followed Alex along and they went into a different direction when the pathway turned on a bend. This part of the park was bigger, a few benches lined along, bushes and pigeons all around a pile of broken up bread someone had left.

Alex's pace slowed when he recognised the particular spot. He remembered like it was yesterday. That little spot just by one of the big trees by the fence. Eliza had planted some rose seeds, they probably looked beautiful in the spring and summer. Currently all that laid there was a small patch of land with a tuff of icy grass with fallen leaves and branches.

When John caught up just behind him, he's looking at Alex with concern. Alex is staring at the little spot with the most distant look in his eyes and his face was sullen. The wind swayed past the pair of them, their pony-tails drifting as it did. John followed Alex's gaze and sees the small spot.

"Alexander, what is it?" John asked.

He placed a hand on Alex's upper arm then rubbed it up and down. "Alexander?" John repeated, worry slipping in his voice when Alex never answered.

"Here -" Alex slipped out. "Here is where Eliza and me put our baby to rest."

There was a pause. John mostly keeping his eyes on Alex rather than the spot. He gives it a glance
and moves back to Alex. John continues to rub on Alex's arm before taking his hand instead. Alex appreciated the gesture, he feels John press on his hand and Alex squeezes back.

"I just wanted to show you, y'know, since we were passing" Alex said softly. John says nothing, he looked as glum as Alex did. Both their eyes as bleak as the grey late-afternoon sky. It was getting darker now, almost four and colder.

"Even though it was a year ago," Alex added quietly. "It still feels like yesterday, Eliza put our kid in this little flannel we had. I did the burial and she planted roses."

John let out a small hum and squeezes him again but tighter. Alex appreciated John trying to comfort him, he wasn't saying much but it was enough.

Being able to talk about this though it felt like fresh air. Alex had been wanting to tell John about it all for ages, now the weight was off his chest and his head space felt lighter.

"We even had a copy of the scan, but we decided to bury that as well" Alex said with a shrug. "It felt too much to keep that on top of everything else."

With a small sniffle from Alex, John looks to him again with concern and so he circled his thumb on top of Alex's hand. It felt nice to have that small bit of comfort. Still Alex felt empty. He figured it was a part of himself that he would never get back.

Alex sighed and he tilts his head, he's staring at the sky. The murky clouds were overlapping one another, daylight slowly fading. Alex knew they ought to get back soon before it started snowing again.

But he felt better for telling John.

There was quiet again but it didn't take long for John to break it.

"When Martha died," John said out softly. "I felt like I lost myself" Alex turns to John, he's giving his boyfriend a little bit of a smile, it encourages John to continue with whatever else he wanted to say next. So he did.

"I know it isn't the same as long a child, I'm sorry if that was insensitive in some way." John added. He's looking at Alex with an unsure expression but Alex is shaking his head.

"No, it isn't, you've still lost someone. It still matters." Alex said to him, he waited a moment as they remained in silence before Alex is dabbing his thumb on the shell of John's hand. "Shall we head back?"

With a nod from John, they quietly headed back.

Alex takes one last glance at the little grave before turning his heels as John tugged him along.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter isn't as long and I didn't really want to make it too long since the next one will be much longer. I hope you all enjoy it anyway!
John really is... he's something. Poor Alex.

Thank you for the comments and love on the last chapter, it means a lot to me!

Also I have tumblr now so if anyone wants to chat and share ideas or ask questions I am to be found here: Littlepinkphoenix.tumblr.com <3
Fourteen year old John lay there in bed still unmoving despite one of the maids had shoved his curtains aside almost half an hour ago. He made no effort to get up or bother to do anything. John whimpered when he turned on his front there in bed, he's cradling his pillow there under his chin and frowning at the ceiling. Everything still hurt, his ribs, his back and legs.

His eyes welled up with a new batch of tears and he's sniffling away. His pillow was always bogged up with snot and dried tears from the night before. John couldn't bare another day of school, it was getting out of hand, the bullying was horrific. High school wasn't too far off and his parents were planning on sending him to some fancy private school.

Despite his plea not to go, his father hadn't listened. Henry Laurens never did when it came to his children, especially John. His first born, the one he was always hardest on. It made John feel so worthless and the mockery his father made out of him.

If it wasn't another sly dig over John's long curly hair then it was about him being slim as a rake or his passion for art. But other than that, he had told John to 'man up' the night before. He said he didn't want to hear another word over the bullying and had plainly told John the other kids were probably just having a joke. Yet John had bruises, big ugly, purple and yellow bruises. He'd been beat up good in the field, again.

Three guys from his class, taller, stockier had laughed when they kicked him to a pulp. John had no idea why they picked on him, he had known these boys since elementary school. But then they had never even sent him a second glance, up until now. John had no idea where it all stemmed from, he hadn't paid the any attention before now. He despised them to the core of his soul.

His mother was always working, Eleanor had listened when he told her about the bullying but never gave John's qualm the time of day. Not until seeing the botched bruises over her son's body when he refused to go to school. After a word the night before with her husband, he gave in and they decided to have John homeschooled until he was due for high school. She had told John about this last night, he wouldn't be attending middle school anymore and would have to do his studies at home.

John was glad though, so glad. He didn't have to face that hell hole again. Despite it all, his parents were cold on the matter. His father never asked if John was okay, simply left the room and fled to his office. Business was always waiting. His mother told John the news and left him to the maids where they ran him a hot bath afterwards and brought up his supper to his bedroom.

Henry and James were out still. Henry at football practice and James was at a friend's house. Martha was busy with homework. Although John had overheard their mother complain at Martha about her grades, John could only assume their father had ordered for Martha locked in her room again until she had finished her work. This happened often. Sometimes even to John but not as often as it happened to Martha.

John miserably rolls on his side and he's closing his teary eyes. He sniffled aloud again, his battered legs shifting slowly in the satin sheets and even just moving them hurt. He was grateful of one of the maids helping him up the stairs, John had been lucky they weren't broken. When the kicking and battery had ended John could barely move. Another pupil found him and had called the
teachers to pick him up. John had been driven home by the family chauffeur.

Even breathing hurt and John had only just stopped coughing up blood last night. He could still taste that horrific iron bitterness at the back of his mouth. It was tangy and ghastly. Martha had checked on him before they went to sleep once she had been allowed out of her room. She was a good sister, John loved her to pieces.

Martha was the only one John had ever felt close to in his entire life, James and Henry not so much. They were close and often oddlyed John out despite him being the older brother. Well, the eldest of them all. John didn't know why. He never felt a bond with them, not like Martha. Maybe it was because they were closer in age.

But Martha had soothed his back and played with his hair until he drifted off. She always told John about her day at school, the girls she was friends with, people she didn't like or teachers. Martha was fairly popular at her school. She had plenty of friends. John secretly always felt envious.

Martha always knew how to light up the room, she walked in and people instantly loved her. It wasn't like that for John though. People looked at him in a different way. John didn't like it, one bit. But at the end of it all, he had Martha, his Martha.

As John rolls on his side, he sighs softly and bats away more tears. He can't cry again, not again. John didn't think he had anymore tears to shed. Yet here he was, festering away in his own pity and self despair. John places his arm on the spare pillow there beside him, then he's slowly reaching to his pyjama sleeve and he's biting his lip, chewing on it hard. As he does, he's gently shoving up his sleeve and revealing his cluster of cuts on his arm.

John's lip wavered as he did. His newest one, the one he made last night was there, bright red around the edges and still oozing with dried blood. His pyjama sleeve was blotched with it too, stained and gross. He just hoped one of the maids wouldn't notice. John didn't care if they knew but it was his parents finding out. He knew they would go off at him. Especially his father, his father already thought he was unworthy of existing anyway.

After all, Mary's accident was his fault apparently. It was all his fault.

He swallows with a 'gulp' at the memory of poor Mary. It hurts as he does, almost like he is swallowing a giant ball. It achy and painful.

John knew he should stop with the cutting, he had to, he needed to. He just couldn't though, it helped so much. It was his only way of release. If John couldn't do this then he would just lose his mind and end himself sooner. Cutting though, he had to.

Through the darkness of his time in school and his horrible home life. He needed to keep his little secret safe.

At that moment John could hear the door's hand churn and squeak. Immediately John shoved down his pyjama sleeve and he's sitting upright slightly, watching the door with wide eyes. As it opens, John's moment of panic is over and he deflates with utter relief.

John's sad expression vanishes, the emptiness in his dull hazel eyes lit up with this burning fire, his dimpled popped up in his cheeks as his lips upturn into a sickly sweet smile. His freckles are prominent and colour is filled in his face.

John moved a curly stand out of his face and tucked it behind his ear in the most endearing way yet flirtatious way. He's sitting up that bit more, his pyjama shorts hoisting up his inner bruised
thigh as he did, still grinning and he's shoving his bed sheets down a little.

"You came" John says coyly, although that hint of excitement still stains his voice. John is shifting to his knees, it hurts when he does but he manages. He winces but he continues to smile brightly.

"I knew you would come..."

As John moved forward on the bed he's swinging his legs over the side and spreading his thighs out as he did. He's biting his lip looking up innocently. His eyes were still red from crying but he knew he could make it work.

"Did anyone see you come in?" John whispered.

Then he's biting his lip.

"Good"
With a small giggle from John.

The latch slipped in place there on his door once it shut.

John hoped just one more secret wouldn't hurt.

The following couple of days after John didn't do anything else hurtful to Alex nor mention the biting. Alex kept it at a low too and tried to keep their Christmas spirits up instead by deciding they
go drinking at a few bars, with good live music or ice skating.

They did them both and drunk John was an amusing one. Alex drank even more so than John, he ended up having to put Alex to bed when hauling him from out the back of a cab. Then one day they did some ice skating, John was particularly very good at it and had been since childhood.

Alex remembered John telling him how he would skate at the back of his house, on the frozen lake with his siblings growing up. Alex was far from a graceful skater, the amount of times he fell on his ass there in central park's ice rink was ridiculous. Alex would gripe for John to help him up rather than stand there laughing at him.

People were staring, some snickering and one guy even offered to help Alex up. Alex was about to take whoever it was's hand and that was when John stepped in, nearly pushing the guy over himself grasping Alex's hand. Yanking Alex up, John's strong grip and support had Alex at an even balance. John murmured a brief thanks to the guy all while staring him down, obviously telling him to leave. Alex was too busy gathering himself to notice.

From there on John lead Alex by their hands around, he was a good enough teacher surprisingly and Alex learnt how to skate. Well, kind of. John had to help him balance himself and held Alex up. But Alex didn't like it one bit when John sped them up, Alex terrified he would fall again and he's almost slipping, Alex's heart nearly jumped out his chest.

But John kept him upright thankfully. They ended their skating there and John is popping a kiss on Alex's forehead, telling him he did good and it was okay. Alex appreciated that and could only smile back at John.

John made it up to him by buying them dinner and taking Alex to see a movie. He was trying.

Alex noticed his efforts and although it wad nice Alex wanted John to properly make a change within himself. To take responsibility and care when others were hurt. So far Alex had witnessed John be openly rude to members of staff without an issue. His attitude was starting to bother Alex. It had Alex wondering if John had always been like this before he left Charleston. Maybe John never really was this shy, quiet boy. It really did make Alex think.

With John's hand wrapped around him during the movie, it was on Alex's mind and Alex barely paid much attention to what was happening. Even so, he tried to keep watching and block out his thoughts. Perhaps John was just like this naturally. Alex knew he would have to accept it and just deal with it. Let it be that.

When they got back to the apartment it was after around an hour or so once they'd settled for the evening. Both shared a long hot bath, now in their comfy clothes and were lounging on the sofa. John for once wasn't drawing, he was hooked on some new TV series and Alex was tapping away on his keyboard. He had to get on with his book despite it being the holidays. Alex hadn't done much writing since John came back with him to New York.

Alex felt himself begin to cramp, he had been sat in the same position for ages. His neck was stiff too and as he swivelled it around, he forgot all about the bite mark and it was still healing. He grimaces to himself when he did. It still stung like a bitch.

John was lay on alex's legs, his own were dangling off the end of the sofa's arm. It was all very quiet until Alex felt his phone vibrate there in the pocket of his sweats. He's placing his laptop aside on the table and grabbing out his phone. John stiffens as he does.

As Alex is looking at the caller ID he's shocked to find that it's John's mother. Eleanor.
turning to see what Alex is doing and he's looking up at Alex.

"Who is it?" John asked.

Alex looked over to John.

"It's your mom" He said.

Then immediately John is sitting up, he's swiftly pulling his legs over the sofa's arm and turning so he's sat up properly. John didn't look pleased at all. A frown etched right there on his face. Alex's insides were swirling and he felt worry.

"Don't answer it" John muttered. Alex was twiddling his lip between his teeth. He didn't know what to do.

Alex looked back down at his phone, she kept on ringing too, persistent it seemed. Alex is glancing up at John again. John's cold hard stare was daring Alex to even press the accept button. Alex drops his gaze back at it anyway.

"Ignore it" John said.

"But John, it could be important." Alex reasons. "C'mon, it's only your mom."

John's having none of it though. He's shaking his head and huffing, "She's so fucking annoying" Then he's trying to grab the phone out of Alex's hand, but Alex moves it out of his reach. He see's how John looked at him too. The iciness of John's glare gave him chills, Alex didn't give in though.

"Alexander, pass me it."

"Baby, your mother did ask me to call her from time to time. She gets worried, she's probably just wanting to know what you're doing for the holidays." Alex explained.

John rolls his eyes. "Like she cares"

"John" Alex sighs. "She does"

"Does she fuck" John hisses. "She's never cared, she's nosey. That's all this is. Don't answer it."

Alex shakes his head and he's standing up. "John, I have to take this. Otherwise she'll be freaking out, I'm supposed to be your caretaker for all she knows!"

Then a pinch of hurt crossed John's features, his brow knit and he's getting up now too. "I'm your boyfriend! You're not my caretaker -"

"I know!" Alex cried. He's tipping his head backwards in sheer annoyance and inhaling sharply."But she doesn't know that! Does she? I'm getting paid for looking after you. Honey, you know this." Alex begins to walk away and as he does John is mooching over infront of him. John's face was like thunder.

"So it's all about money?"

Then Alex just declines the call, he's darting his eyes up at John angrily and tossing his phone over on the sofa.

Alex puts his hands on his hips and looks back to John sadly. "No, it isn't. But the arrangement still stands between your mother and me." Alex admitted. It was true, Alex was still in the contact with
her. John's eye twitched. "I never thought I would have fallen in love with you, not at the beginning. This all just happened..."

"It did" said John. "But you wont tell her about us?"

Alex is narrowing his eyes at John. "You would be okay with her knowing?"

Then John is taking both of Alex's hands off his hips and lacing their fingers together. John squeezes Alex's hands as he does this and he's staring right into Alex's big brown eyes. John looked emotional, sad. It only made Alex feel worse.

"Alexander, I don't care about what she thinks. You're my family now." John said to him. "I'm leaving Charleston as soon as I can and I'm coming back here, for you."

There was a pause from either one of them.

"Honey, I know, I know. I get that and I want that too. But you still need to think about it and I honestly, do need the money." Alex says. It was the truth. John didn't appear to look pleased with it either.

Alex sees how John's frown seeps back in. "I really do, that's the whole reason why I took this job on. Baby, stick it out for another couple of months. Until the contract is over at least. Please."

"Money" John muttered like it was the magic word. "That's all it takes?"

John lets go of Alex's hands. "What?" said Alex, he's confused.

"How much?" John asked. Alex is tilting his head, he didn't understand.

"John, the hell are you talking about?"

And John is rolling his eyes like this is obvious. "Tell me how much, I'll give it to you. You can call her back right now, do it. To hell with the stupid contract. Just call her, tell her, I want her to know we're fucking." Alex scoffed at John's brazen outburst.

"You can't be serious, Jesus Christ." Alex is blinking away at him like he's mad.

"I am, do it. I want her to know about us, then that way you won't have to keep looking over your shoulder and worrying." John sighs. "I mean, I've already gone through the trouble to find us a new place. It isn't as if you'll be struggling Alexander with me around."

"Wait - wait! When did you do that?" Alex said flabbergasted. "Why didn't you consult me first?!"

"Calm down. I was going to tell you in the new year, I wanted it to be a surprise" John sighs, as if it was Alex's fault. Alex's trying to process it all in his head. All of this was everywhere right now. It was such a mess. "I've got us a viewing, I want you with me though before anything. I've thought it through. Give me some credit, god."

"Jack... I seriously need to think about it first" Alex tells him. "Please"

John nods. Then he's going over to the sofa, Alex watches as he does and protests when John takes Alex's phone. "Call her now, tell her."

Alex had to be careful. John's mother could easily scrap his pay out, all the money he was getting in could be withdrawn and it's goodbye to a brighter future. But Alex wondered if he did take up
John's offer, take the money from his boyfriend, would he be any better off.

Living with John, under his name, his rules, have given money from him. Feel like he owes John. Alex had to admit, the whole thing was suffocating. He didn't want to feel trapped. It was all happening too fast.

"No" Alex sighed.

"Alexander" John says warningly.

"Fine, okay. I'll do it" Alex says quietly. John passes Alex the phone back when Alex takes it he immediately goes to the contact list.

John doesn't see though but Alex chooses a random number from his contacts and dials it. He never dials John's mother.

Once whoever picks up, Alex tells them how him and John are together. He tries to make it sound realistic, Alex slowly strolls around the living room as he witters on. The person on the other end is confused but Alex continues to spew nonesense. John is on the sofa, staring at him, waiting.

When the call ended Alex plonks himself back down beside John. His boyfriend nudging him softly on the leg. "What did she say?"

Alex's mind was searching for any lie.

Anything.

"She wasn't best pleased" Alex twiddles the phone in his hand. He shrugged and met John's gaze. Alex wondered if John could see past his bullshit. "I mean, I tried baby. I really did. She put the
phone down on me in the end."

John shuffled up to Alex and hugged him. "Doesn't matter" John tells him with a small smile. "You did it, you did it for us. Now she can't get in the way. I'll give you all you need. We don't need her."

"You're right" Alex gives him a false smile of his own. "She can't"

Well, that's what John thought. Alex just hoped Eleanor wouldn't be calling him back soon.

For now the paranoia would just have to consume him.

Rain pattered against the long arched windows of John's room. It was late evening and dinner already ended an hour ago. John hadn't really intended for Martha to impose on him but she had done. John wished she hadn't.

He wasn't in the mood.

Especially for this.

He didn't need looking after.

"I don't need babying, Martha. Go away."

Martha sighed as she's glancing over John's arm. "You need to stop this, Jack." She mumbled. Hurt in her eyes, she hadn't it when John pushed her away. All she wanted to do was help. But John was beyond help these days.

He was out of order; bad at school, claims of bullying and had recently been expelled from their private school. John now was being homeschooled and it was driving him crazy
"Seriously, if mother and father find out they'll loose it. You could be locked up! I can't loose you."

John hummed softly at her response. "Guess so"

She swatted him lightly on his knee.

"John you've already been kicked out of school!" Martha spat. But John shrugged, unnerved.

Then Martha's shifty eyes land on all the portraits of naked men and sketches lay there over on his desk. John had such a warped mind, he had become shameless, careless even.

Her words only seemed to go into one of John's ears and out the other. Never processed, he looked at her blankly. His hazel eyes void, ringed with sleepless nights and misery. She knew John was miserable sitting in these four walls all day, everyday. He wasn't allowed back into the outside world without their parents permission. It was cruel - yet Martha knew it was for the best.

Their parents had to be cruel to be kind, for John's sake.

"You're off the rails. I mean, what you did at that school..." Martha sucked in a sharp breath and she's dropping her gaze. John had a ghost of a smirk there on his lips. As Martha's eyes lifted, she saw it.

John's gleam in his eyes. Calculating as he ever was.

Martha bit the inside of her lip and kept her composure. This was John, her John. She needn't be scared of him. However lately Martha's trust for him was unbuckling. Every thread of love she had for him was loosening ever so.

"John, it's not something to be smiling about." She growled.

John snickered at her. "Oh Marth, it wasn't that bad. Besides, it was just a joke."

This was what Martha could never understand with John. The fact he didn't see anything wrong with his actions, there was no empathy in his wrongs and it was never him at fault. Excuses, excuses.

Martha tilts her head to the side, sadly. "Poisoning the half the school is not a joke."

John just didn't understand his own actions. There was no conscience, nothing.

She didn't know when he had become this way.

Just the other week John had lost his temper with their youngest brother James. James had been prancing around John here in his room, bugging him as John worked on one of his crafts. He was piecing together a model aeroplane, crafting usually kept John at peace, out of trouble. Calmed him. But James had thought it would be funny to knock down John's model and it all loosened, out of place before collapsing in a heap.

Martha had been sat on John's bed reading away, ignoring her brothers - until all hell had broke out.

John screaming at James and almost throttled him not far short. Martha had to step in, send James out and calm John. Although John had apologised to James the morning after, hugged him and promised he would never do that again. James accepted John's apology, hugged him back and Martha remembered the terrified way James stared back at her. Martha stuck around just incase
anything else happened. Nothing did, luckily.

Snapping back to reality, Martha shook her head at John. "You know what you did was completely out of order."

At this John moves his eyes from hers. "But it wasn't me" He told her and John's tapping his fingers on the bed sheets and leaned backwards in a slump on his elbows. Unbothered.

"Don't lie to me!"

"I'm not! It wasn't fucking me - I've told you!" John shot back. "It was them!"

And Martha scoffed, "What? You're really blaming that Charles guy and Sam - your boyfriend -"

John glared at her.

"He's not my boyfriend and it was Charle Lee's idea! I'm telling the truth." John hurried out.

"Your friend, Charles?" She practically laughed at him. John was seething and his eyes narrowed.

"He isn't my friend - not anymore, neither of them are."

Really what Martha wanted to say was 'why is that then?' but she held it in.

Instead Martha nodded along. She didn't appear moved one bit. It was a pack of lies. Martha could see it there in John's eyes, she saw through him unlike anyone else. Only she could read him.

With the shake of the head Martha looks back to John's arm and she shuffled closer to him.

"Listen to me, this -" She gestured to his cuts. John's brow raised. "It can't go on. You're seventeen, you're too young to feel like -" Martha paused for a second and met John's eyes and finished with a small sigh. "I mean, doesn't it bother you? Doing this to yourself?" Martha hissed.

"Not really" John said back carelessly. "They heal"

Martha scoffs before firing back with, "And they scar - seriously." She takes his arm, her long dainty fingers traipsing over the new cuts. John noticed Martha's nails as she did. They were red raw still, cut right back to the quick. John's eye twitched from the sight of them. They looked more painful than his cuts. All oozing with the dried blood just underneath the root of the nail.

With the roll of his eyes John paid her no mind and moved his arm out of her. "Did father catch you wearing nail polish again" John hissed back. He looked at her right in the eyes and Martha frowns at him.

"Just asking" John sang bitterly.

She huffed at him and clamped up her hands into balls. Martha looked self conscious at that moment, she bit her lip and knit her brow. John smirked since he knew he was right. "I'm not the only one breaking the rules then I guess"

"Well at least I don't do what you do," Martha snarked.

John shot her a cut look for that one.

"But in all seriousness, we should stop. You with the cutting and I stick to father's rules, no make up or anything else. No matter how much we hate them. John, we must." She said, sadly.
It was the only way to survive in this house.

Then John turned his back on her there and reached for the sketchbook on his nightstand. Martha gaped like a goldfish as John turned from her and she spluttered out with, "Can't you just listen!"

"Oh I heard" John sighs. "You can follow them - but me? I refuse to."

"Why?" Martha yanks on the back of John's shirt and he glances over his shoulder at her. Martha almost flinches at the dark glare he cast her but she shrugged it off. This was her brother, her John. She hated how he could be such a ignorant pain at times.

"John" She tries.

John was already flipping open his sketchbook and smoothing down the page getting at the ready to draw. "I just... I don't agree with father. He's a brute, a bully." Martha's frown softened on him and she looked down into her own lap. "The way he treats us -"

The grip John had on his sketchbook became deadly. His fingernails grit right into the cover and he almost snapped his pencil.

"If he died tomorrow, it would be a miracle for us all." John finished quietly.

Martha's eyes went wide and terrified. She glanced over at John and John was looking directly back at her. He twisted his mouth and shrugged his shoulders at her before going back to work on a drawing. Martha remained silently and her eyelids hollowed. Deep down knowing that what John was saying was correct. Without their father they would be happier, free.

No more beatings, no more punishments, no more aimless rules, no more control, no more refinement to their bedrooms and freedom of the outside world. They could be teenagers and grow into happier adults.

But the way Martha could see it in John's eyes there. That look - oh god. No. Just no.

"No" Martha whispered, her voice in shock. "John, don't even think about hurting him!"

No.

She couldn't bare that.

Her own brother trying to kill their father.
This was where they drew the line.

"You know what I really think..." Martha began softly.

John stiffened, he was listening but continued to draw.

Martha's lips turned upwards into a sullen smile, her hazel eyes sad and her expression glum regardless. "With the way you've become, John -"
John cut his eyes at her, waiting, so she went there.

Well, that did it.

"You're worse than father"
At that John's pencil dropped on the paper.

He immediately turns to her and Martha was slow because John struck harshly her right across the face. Martha gasped as he did, it caught her right off guard and she's sent over on her side there on John's bed. John is heaving angrily, seething and he's staring back at his hand. It quivered as he did.

Martha was panting in fear and half her long curly hair covered the burning mark on her cheek. She fearfully looked back at John like a doe in the headlights. Her lip bobbed up and down, she's shaking and tears were glistening in her eyes already.

John continued to stare at his hand and he's dropping it there at his side. "Get out" He whispered, darkly.

At first Martha doesn't move she's too far gone in shock. Her own brother, her Jacky. The one she loved and trusted, he'd gone against her. Hit her. Never had he done that before. Martha slowly sat up right, she's holding her throbbing cheek and there was blood there in the corner of her mouth. John had packed in a good punch, enough to make her bleed.

"Get out" He repeats, voice like thunder. "Out of my sight!"

Then John is shooting up from his spot on the bed and Martha scrambled up to her feet but she wasn't quick enough. John hoists her up by the collar of her school blouse. Martha spluttered from the top button tight against her throat. She's trying to palm John off but his grip was too strong.

"J-John!" She gasped out.

He didn't listen.

John is dragging her across the room and as he did Martha is struggling out of his grasp. She managed to break free of John and inhales deeply when she did. Her air supply had almost cut off. Tearfully she looked up at John with shock and betrayed written all over her face. John paid her no mind and went for her hair instead.

"No - stop!"
Between Martha's gasping breaths and cries, her struggle and John's grip on her mass of curls. He pulled her over to his bedroom door angrily.

"John! Let go!" She almost screamed.

For that John hit her head against the door and Martha saw stars nearly. Before anything else, it all happened in such a blur. John's lips at Martha's ear and he uttered in. Hot breath tickled inside of her ear as the horrid pain echoed throughout her body.

"If you ever say that again -" John murmured. "You're gone"

Martha's entire soul shook at her brother's words and she remained shellshocked.

Paralysed.

John is yanking on the door handle, twisting it and he's tossing his sister out into the grand long hallway. Martha went with a stagger almost stumbling on her back there on the floor. Instead Martha hit the back of the wall and she's up against it facing John who stood there in his doorway.
John was murderous.

Martha continued to shake, but despite John having the intimidating advantage of looming over her those few inches taller. She still managed to open her mouth, slightly and slowly. Her eyes wide with terror and tears streaming down her freckles bruised face. John narrowed his own, as if daring her to even speak.

Fearfully and fearlessly.

She did.

"If you ever lay a hand on me again, Jack. I'll tell mother and father about Francis." Martha said, stammering in-between.
That was it.

John's furious mask flipped the other way to the one that showed utter terror. Indeed, she had hit a nerve.

“Oh, that's right. I know all about you and him, I've known for years. Heard you both, I've seen the way you look at each other. A man half your age.”

Martha squinted her eyes at him hatefully. "I'll tell them that you fuck your tutor -" She breathed out. "And that you've been fucking him since you were barely even thirteen. That will do it, they'll get you locked up for sure. Because you know what, you deserve to be. You're sick, you're
demented, you're unruly, you're a psycho -"

John felt the fear shake his core and his entire frame wanted the earth to eat him whole. His breathing became rapid and John could feel his stomach welch. He wanted to be sick.

For the very last part, Martha was smiling this time. She took two steps towards John and leaned in. Their eyes magnetic, burrowing each others vision viciously. Martha wasn't joking and John knew she wasn't. She twists her head that extra bit and the next part kills John.

"You're a total freak"

Chapter End Notes

EEEEPPPPPPPPPPP

Some backstory - but it doesn't end there! THERE IS MORE!

Thank you for the love on this story <3 it means a lot to me and also I apologise for the late update! I've been taking a short break! x
Alex was glad to get to his parents.

All morning John had not stopped pestering him to tell his parents about their relationship.

Honestly, Alex wasn't ready to. It was still far too early and John was pushing his luck.

When they pulled up at his old foster family home, Alex felt butterflies in his stomach and that sense of warmth fill him.

He was home.

Then when the front door flung open, revealing his foster father, Washington. Oh, Alex was over the moon.

"Alexander, son" Washington greeted. His wry smile never changed, it was faint as ever but always enough to warm Alex's heart up. He knew just how much affectionate lay behind it.

Alex gives his father a quick side hug, Washington is patting him there on the back as he does. John stands there just behind Alex, lingering in the doorway still, watching their exchange, slightly awkward. As this happened, Washington flickered his eyes over to John and takes him in sharply. John inhales slowly as he does, their eyes finally meeting. So this was it.

As this happened Alex stepped aside from his father to make space between John and Washington. He looked between them both, his smiling still there but it felt forced. Suddenly the air felt heavier than usual.

Washington was skimming his dark eyes up and down John. John stood there poised, hands in his back pockets and stood elegantly. Alex assumed it was how John was just raised, to stand proud and be polite as ever when meeting someone new. His entire demeanour changed.

Alex was surprised just by how differently John was.

"Laurens" Washington addresses. John's straightening himself at the spine, his shoulders immediately broader and John's facial expression firm. "John Laurens, finally. A face to the name"

Alex watches the pair.

John gives Washington a pleasant smile, he's curtly nodding too and lends out a hand to Washington. "That's correct. A pleasure to meet you, sir."

Alex wanted to splatter out into laughter, his John acting so formal. It was crazy. But Alex knew just how much John wanted to impress his parents, he had jittered on about it non-stop for the past couple of days.

Washington tightly shook John's hand back and stands back as he finishes. "Yes, it is a pleasure."
My though, you're very much like your mother, if I may say so myself." He tells John. Alex was staring at John, while Alex did agree that John was the full blown image of his mother. He saw John fall into that smile where it showed he was bothered and that this was just an upfront. Alex's stomach churned.

John let out a false laugh, "I'm often told that, but me and all my siblings though. We're very much alike." Alex nodded in agreement.

"John looks more like Eleanor than the rest though" Alex chuckled. Then he's in alarm when John tried snaking an arm around his waist and Alex stiffly moved out of John's reach. Washington did take note of this and John's looking to Alex with shock in his eyes. Alex felt bad, he didn't want to tell his father just yet about him and John. It was still so new, so raw.

"I wouldn't say that was all true" John awkwardly said back.

Washington just continued on grinning. "I have to agree with Alexander, you do resemble her very much. Also, I might add, your father, Henry." John went white as a ghost when his father was brought up. His eyes widened slightly. Alex noticed this. "He was an interesting character, he had a lot to bring to the table. A hard-worker and I had a high amount of respect for him."

Alex kept his eyes on John.

John looked sheepish but he proceeded to smile and added "Thank you, Sir."

He knew John was lying. John hated his father and Alex knew that. John had told Alex everything his father had done to him and his siblings. Right now though wasn't the best time to tell Washington about it all though. Perhaps another time.

"Where's mom?" Alex asks, he figures the change of conversation was for the best. John looked relieved and Alex could see it in his eyes.

Washington gestures to the dining room and Alex's bright smile reappeared. He's grabbing his father and John pulling them into the dining room. Martha, his foster mother was setting the table up. She heard them come in and was taken by surprise. Alex went flocking to her. Even after all this time she still looked the same, short, stubby and kept her same reading glasses hitched there on top of her head.

"Oh, Alexander" She said kissing Alex on the cheeks. "It's so lovely to have you back!"

John stood there right beside Alex, he practically hopped in front so he could be noticed. Martha switched her attention to John, she jilted slightly when she had only she saw him. She grinned at him and all pleasantries were exchanged. Then she pulled John down for a hug and pecked him softly on the cheeks.

"Ah, John Laurens. It's wonderful to finally meet you. I've heard so much about you, my husband talks about your mother and father often." She said beaming. "What a delightful young thing you are, so handsome too."

Washington laughed as he went off in the search of glasses and some wine. Alex rolled his eyes at his mother, he knew what was coming. John's dimpled smile, angelic eyes and aura had won her over quickly it seemed. Martha was fussing over John, touching his ringlet curls, his soft freckled cheeks and kept complimenting him. It was as if she were in love with him herself. Alex sighed aloud.

"Mom, can't you just leave him alone?" Alex chuckled awkwardly. Alex's dark eyes landing on
John with a withering gleam. John didn't falter from it.

John cast Alex a smug look right back and smirked at him. Martha swatted Alex on the shoulder which only caused John to laugh aloud.

"Oh, be quiet you. I'm only saying! He is such a beautiful boy. I'm actually stunned, I mean it." Alex groans and he's walking over to the fireplace for a warm. John was still stood over by Martha. "So tell me about yourself, John. I would love to know more. I hear you're such a good friend to Alex."

Friend.

Alex had forgotten, his parents were aware that their relationship was only platonic and that Alex looked after John. They had no idea Alex spent more time riding John, clattering his headboard against his bedroom wall and them kissing in passion, lazling and loving each other than being just solely friends.

He didn't have to look.

Alex could already feel John's eyes on him. He said nothing and didn't look in John's direction once.

In the end John and Martha take up the sofa, Washington comes back with glasses of white for them all. Alex admired the big christmas tree parked there in the corner, the usual traditional decorations he used to put on them as a kid were all there. The same lights twinkling way. Christmas spirit now fully lodged inside of Alex, he can't help but grin at the tree and he's happy, he's home, again.

Washington sat in his usual arm chair and Alex is parked on the arm of the sofa next to John. John is telling them all about his childhood there in South Carolina, only the good bits.

Martha asking a myriad of questions, Washington is nodding along in interest and while John is telling the story. Alex can feel John slowly sliding his way, whenever he laughs or adjusts himself, he's closer to Alex. Practically parked up beside him. Alex knows what John is doing, he's sly, so sly but not smart enough.

Alex stretches and gets up away from John before announcing he needs the bathroom. Alex can feel John's staring burn holes through him, he knows that harsh stare very well and John is irritated.

In the bathroom Alex does what he needs to do, swishes his face with water and rubs it with one of Martha's floral towels hanging on the radiator. The place still looked the same. Fluffy pink mat and cosy on the toilet. The same lace curtains at the window, old fashioned bath tub and tiny flowers on the bathroom tiles. Pink shower curtain. It was hideous but Alex loved it. Their house was the same as it had always been since he was a boy. Home sweet home.

Then Alex felt a pang of sadness hit him like a ton of bricks. How he missed home sometimes and then he would think of his first home, the one he shared with his mother as a child. Their shabby rented little apartment in the middle of manhattan.

Crying babies on the top floor, car chases outside and shields of rain that used to sneak into their room from the broken window. Still it had been home to him regardless.

However now Alex was facing the dilemma of having to possibly move out in the few coming months ahead. John wanted to buy a place in New York and while the idea of it was nice. Alex
honestly wasn't feeling it. He didn't want to move out of his place just yet.

It was a dump but it was all he had and having John rule the roost of the new place he wanted to buy. Some fancy spacious studio on a top floor with a massive balcony and high security. Sure, Alex liked the look of it all when John had shown him all the pictures. But it was ridiculous, the pricing was through the roof and it was in the city. Alex continued to tell John to buy an actual house - not an apartment. John as usual didn't listen.

That was another thing Alex that secretly bugged Alex. John.

John having that hold over him if they did move into a new place owned by John. His rules, his place. Alex wasn't sure he would be able to cope and it made him feel so infantile. Alex had always been independent and he wasn't going to allow that to happen. John wasn't going to walk all over him.

It was finding the words to let John down and for Alex to tell John that he didn't want a swanky, fancy apartment.

Alex wanted to keep his old place and wait for John to actually graduate first. See how their relationship progresses since it was still so early. They were still learning about each other and if Alex was honest - John was still a stranger to him.

Alex didn't know everything about John. As much as he loved him and Alex had this deep incline about John having more to him than what met the eye. John had secrets, ones Alex wanted to know and things about the Laurens family that were buried under the carpet. Questions John avoided and gaps that left empty. Alex wanted to fill them before taking things further with John.

Mostly for closure. Alex didn't want secrets between them and he felt terrible for feeling so uneasy about his own boyfriend. It was almost as if Alex was convincing himself that John wasn’t trustworthy and he knew, that said something.

After a quick swish of water over his face and wipe down with the hand towel hanging up by the sink there. Alex checked himself over in the mirror, re-did his bun tighter and left the bathroom.

Alex was in another world when he came back into the living room because Washington and Martha looked at him over their shoulders with such betrayed looks. Alex immediately felt his palms go sweaty. He hadn't done anything wrong from what he could recall. His beady brown eyes scatter on them all and he's pulling a confused face at them.

"You never told us" Washington spat out. "Not once!"

Then Alex saw it.

John's face. He was smiling away or more like smirking.

Alex knew that he'd done and he wanted to scream at John for going behind his back. He'd told them.

Martha looked offended the most. "You never told your mother that you had a boyfriend! Alexander!" She scolded.

Immediately Alex shot John daggers.

John bit his lip and shuffled around in his seat looking anywhere but at Alex. While Alex wanted to pounce on John and throttle the life out of him for being a big mouth. Alex returned his attention
back to his nosey parents who were waiting for him to start talking. Alex stuffed his hands in his pockets, nodding with a wry smile, he said, "Yeah, me and John. We're dating"

"Why didn't you tell us?" Martha squawked. She grips John's shoulder and squeezes it. Alex rolls his eyes at her. "He's such a gorgeous young man! You should be showing him off!" John's cheeks went a tinge red and he's awkwardly telling Martha she was too kind.

"Your mother is right! But, yes. This amazing news, son" Washington added. "You're moving on!"

That was right. Alex's smile weakened when the reminder of Eliza crossed his mind. God, it had been so long since then. Alex snaps out of it pretty quickly when he sees the way John looks at him. Alex beams at him and instantly John is all smiles again.

"Guess I am" Alex agreed, chuckling.

Dinner went down well, a beautifully cooked roast and some wine to boot. Martha chatting John's ears off all about Alex's childhood and asking him piles of questions. Washington joining in on the conversation and asking John his own things.

John happily told them everything they wanted to know, from his school situation, his parents and siblings, anything and everything. Also how he was an artist too and that he was coming to New York for college. Martha found it wonderful, Washington smiled along and wished him well.

Alex didn't say much.

He didn't know why. Alex felt like he couldn't be himself, not properly and the topic at the table didn't help his current poor appetite either. Usually Alex would guzzle down his food but the conversation between Washington and John was seriously putting him off his dinner. Alex hadn't even expected this to come up and he didn't know this side of John - until now.

"Hunting" Alex repeats.

Washington, Martha and John all look at him. Alex looks back to John and his eye twitches. "Like actually hunting animals?" Alex says again. He feels like a dunce with the way they're looking at him.

"Yes, Alexander." Martha chimes in, laughing. She stabs at one of her carrots. "Unfortunately, it still occurs."

Then Washington says, he gulps his wine first. "I had no idea your father was one to take on the likes of hunting"

"Yeah" John replied, his eyes dance over to Alex's mortified face. "My father used to drag me up the mountains sometimes. Few rabbits, couple of foxes, racoons near where we live. It was easy, they just come out of nowhere, stick around and before you know it - bap. They're down."

Alex almost choked. He had no idea John used to hunt.

"I didn't know you guys had guns?" Alex asked, he had no idea until now about this. John nodded.

"Yeah, in my father's old office and trophy room. I'm fairly surprised you've not seen them? They're all on display."

Alex hadn't come across Henry Laurens's rooms yet. Then again he didn't really want to. The man had been a brute and Alex didn't respect him at all. Anything to do with John's father, he wanted
nothing to do with. Not after what he had done to his boyfriend.

"Damn, I didn't even know." Alex mutters, then stabs a piece of chicken. John nudges his foot under the table, Alex eyes him and John smirks.

Washington raised his brow in surprise. "Oh, really?"

John's eyes never left Alex's though. "Yeah, we used to hunt often. You know what they say, keep one wolf alive and that little lone deer, is never safe."

Martha raised her brow. "Good god"

Washington waves off his wife as he laughs.

Then John turns to Martha with such an innocent smile. "I never liked it really, I always did protest to father. But he never listened." Alex felt himself itch at that comment. It didn't sound sincere. But John had Martha and his father fooled with that charming Laurens smile.

"I am not surprised! It's horrendous" Martha said. "Couldn't you tell him no, John?"

John chuckled, then said, "Well, about that -"

Of course he couldn't. Alex knew why, John's father had ruled his life from what he was told. He had made his childhood a nightmare. God knows what else had happened to John though. Alex only knew half of the tale.

John had won over his mother's sympathy though. However his father remained at arms length, continued to cast John small smiles. Alex could see something more in Washington's eyes though.

While John was being busied by Martha in the living room, she couldn't get enough of him and Alex was pleased Martha approved of John. He really did but Alex wasn't so sure about his father. It was an all on act on both their parts - John's and his father's. Alex could tell there was something unpleasant there when they looked at each other.

Alex was helping him wash up. His father washed and Alex was on drying duty. "So, you're cool about it?" Alex asks, his voice meek.

Washington arches a thick brow at him. "About?"

At that Alex snorts aloud and uses his towel to lightly bat his father's arm. Washington flicks some bubbles at him in return. Alex ends up laughing. "John!"
"Ah, Laurens." Washington says spaciously.

"Well, yeah. My new boyfriend, you like him?" Alex asks, his voice lowered and Alex cautiously looked behind the door at the doorway. No one was there.

He then turns back to Washington who is placing a pot on the draining rack. "I will be honest, Alexander and do me a favour -." Alex raises his brow at him in response and Washington adds, "Shut that door"

Alex goes over to it and gently closes it. They were in private, finally.

"What's up?" Alex asks him, he knew he sounded concerned and Alex would hate for his father to find a fault in John.

Washington sighs heavily and he's scratching his bald head. "I'm just surprised if anything. That you took up with the Laurens's son, I mean, Alexander. What in the world"

Alex sighs himself and he leans against the countertop next to his father. Bends his head down, Alex knew this wasn't going to end well. "It just... happened. We got to know each other, pop. I fell for him along the way, I can't really explain. It's just one of them things."

"Mm, suppose so." Washington said back. He puts a plate down on the rack. "Does his mother know?"

At this Alex is looking over to the door and he looks back to his father. He catches Washington staring right at him, a glimmer of concern in his expression.

"Alexander" Washington sighs again.

"Look, I lied to him. I told him she knows, but I've not got around to telling her yet."

"And why is that?"

Alex crossed his arms and slumps down the counter even further. He sulked like a child. "Because she might end the contract, I can't loose it, Pop. Once the last month is over in the contract, the money is mine." Washington groans 'Alex' under his breath, he didn't sound pleased in the slightest.

Washington shook his head. "I did offer you the money before all of this. But to keep it from his own mother, my colleague. Jesus christ."

"I know, I know." Alex whined, frowning. "I shouldn't be keeping it from her"

Washington then begrudgingly asks, "And how does John feel about all of this?"

"He doesn't know - I lied. I said she knows, keeps her off our backs." Alex muttered. He winced at his father sharp 'Alexander'. "Yeah but -"

"Alexander, no. You shouldn't be lying about any of this."

"Yeah but John wants to have us move into some apartment, said he wants to take care of me and that I don't need her cash. But I just want my own independence, dammit. I'm a grown ass man!" Alex hisses.

"Alexander" Washington snaps out.
But Alex paid him no heed. Alex crossed his arms tighter and huffed. "I mean, sure. Whatever. I get she was a shitty mother to him, her and his father. He got practically everything handed to him though! Never had to work for anything. I mean, imagine, a life like that."

Washington raised his brows at him, his dark eyes wide. "That's a pretty strong accusation to make"

Alex balled his eyes at him. "I'm not, it's the truth. He was awful to John, his brothers and sisters. I mean the guy wasn't allowed to go out, do anything, have friends, they had all these crazy rules. John used to get beaten by his dad a lot."

"And John told you this?" Washington asked carefully.

A nod from Alex. "He told me tons of stuff. He's only told you the nice parts, I bet he's made up half of it. I know John, I can tell when he's being sincere or not by now." Alex muttered. "I mean - his dad used to go hunting! That tells you everything, Henry Laurens was a total twisted fuck!"

"Alex!"

"Well he was!" Alex snapped back defensively.

Washington casts him a fierce glare, one which knocked Alex off of his high horse for a moment. But his father's glare didn't stick. Washington broke back out into weariness and sighed to himself. He put a hand over his forehead as he did. "Son -" He started but Alex talked right over him. Washington only groaned even more as he did. He hated Alex's endless waffle sometimes.

"Honestly, I don't get it, really. I mean, why did his mother even need a caretaker for John?" Alex asked, hunching up his shoulders as he spoke with a mighty scowl. "It isn't like he really needs someone taking care of him! If anything, John needs his own life. Him being at that house, it's drove him crazy."

Washington turns off the faucet and he's ringing out his hands in the sink of any suds. "His mother just wanted him to have... support. She didn't want to leave him alone, you were still not far short living with us when you were his age, Alex." Washington reminded him.

Alex made a childish 'pfft' which only gained him the roll of the eyes off his father. "Yeah, but this isn't the same. No, pop. The whole situation with John, his mother, father - it doesn't sit right. I just know, there is more to this."

His father's shoulders slumped at Alex's words. He finished rinsing a pan and placed it on the rack with everything else.

"But I can't loose the money, I just can't. I know I sound so - greedy, kinda selfish." Alex sighs, Washington's gaze went soft on him and he offers Alex a wry smile. "I just want to, be someone. Like you. Go to law school, do something with my life." At this Washington placed a damp hand on Alex's shoulder, squeezed it and turns to him properly now. "Son, you already are. You're a writer, a fabulous one at that. You are already making a mark in the world, you're creating a legacy just by doing that." He assured him.

Alex looked up to his foster father with big, sad eyes. His shoulder was squeezed again by Washington and earned a pat on the back right after.

"Law school or not - it doesn't matter. Me, your mother, Martha. We're here, we support you,
whatever happens. We're here. However, this thing with Laurens -" Alex watched him stiffen as he ended on John's name.

A certain look etched on Washington's face, one Alex couldn't really make sense of. He took a small pause before asking Alex.

"He makes you happy, doesn't he?"

Alex saw the way his father's eyes narrowed that tiny bit. He knew his father wasn't sure about his decision to be with John. He looked very uncertain, Washington had a way with his whole demeanour when he wasn't completely happy with something. Alex didn't ask him, he just knew from that moment that he wasn't fully on board with their relationship.

"Yeah, he does." Alex confirmed, half confidently.
Washington simply smiled and gave a curt nod. "Then I'm glad for you"

Alex smiled back and softly says, "Thanks, pop. That... that means a lot."

After a quick hug, Alex grabbed the rest of the pots to dry and put them away. That was that.

Martha came running out the front door with a bag of leftovers from dinner, she gave Alex a hug and squeezed the life out of John. She really, truly thought he was wonderful. John hugged her back, he looked completely smitten with her and a quick handshake with Washington. Alex hugged both them before joining John in the waiting cab.

As they rode away, both of them waved Martha and Washington their goodbye. They received
waves in return before zooming off into the night and Alex's foster parents were suddenly out of sight. In the cab Alex huddled up closer to John there on the backseat. He put an arm around his boyfriend, John lay his head down on Alex's shoulder and kissed his jaw as he did.

"Tonight was great" John said, still grinning away there. "Your parents are amazing, I like them."

Alex made a little 'aw' and hugged John a bit tighter. "Awesome, hm. Glad it worked out." Then Alex thought back to Washington there in the kitchen, that face he made over John. The look in his eyes.

John hummed, nuzzled into Alex and sighs contently. "Your mom is the best, she's just - I love her. Here I was worrying and then I'm leaving with practically new parents, huh."

New parents.

Alex went cold as stone at that comment. They weren't his parents, Alex felt against what John had just said. It bothered him and he didn't know why. It shouldn't really.

"Your mom loved the gift we got her, said it was just what she needed too." John says happily. "I wasn't sure about your father though, did he like what we got him? It's just - he was sorta quiet most the night."

Alex had to admit. His father hadn't spoken to John as much as his mother had. Washington asked what he wanted to know, been pleasant and kept it at that. John looked as if it had hurt his feelings though when Alex glanced down at him. So he pecks John on the forehead and held him closer.

"Nah, he said it was great, he liked it. Don't you worry." Alex told him. John smiles but it slowly faded again.

The city lights blurred past them as they flew down the road. Luminous signs shining on the both, the snow hitting the window of the cab, it was coming down heavy tonight Alex noticed. Soft white flakes splattered on the shield, they mingled beautifully with all the vibrant lights of Manhattan.

"What did your father say to you?" John asked quietly, he sounded fairly vulnerable too from what Alex picked up on. Alex quirked a brow at John in confusion. John bit his lip before saying, "In the kitchen... you were both speaking. You were in there a long time."

Oh.
Their conversation about John. Alex panicked inside and it didn't help with John staring at him like that - it felt so accusing.

"Well, we were doing the dishes." Alex told him. Trust John to make it sound like a big deal.

Then John gives him a small nudge with his leg. "I could hear my name come up a few times"

Alex froze right there and then. Just how much had John heard exactly. Alex knew this wasn't going to end well. He looked down at John and met his waiting gaze. Alex did his best to keep it cool, he didn't want to tell John that his foster father wasn't too keen about their relationship.

Also how Alex had lied to John about the contract and his mother not knowing they were together. Since truthfully, Alex was so unsure if he wanted to move out and into a place owned, ran, by John. He had so many doubts about the whole damn thing. It was too rushed, too soon for them to be making rational, desperate decisions like that.

Alex moved a hand on John's knee that rested beside his own. Clasped his knee and rubbed it. "He said -" Alex remembered exactly what Washington said to him. It echoed in his mind. "You're a lovely guy, he's glad for us. He really is."

John batted his eyes at him blankly.
"Just that?" John asks.

"Yeah, baby. He loves you." Alex lied. "They both like you!"

John lifts himself up from Alex's side and he's slumping backwards there beside him. Alex was about to say something, but the look on John's face, stopped him. It was empty, although, his eyes said otherwise. "That's nice" John says calmly, too calmly for Alex's liking.

They had that particular glimmer in them again. Alex knew it was coming up, he leant further back into the seat and turns to the window instead of John. He didn't need this - not again.
"Yet I had to be the one to tell them about us"

Alex was just so glad that they had arrived literally outside at the apartment complex. He needed to get out this car - right now. John was ready to burst.

Back inside the apartment they were quiet at first. They got changed, Alex put the leftovers away and he avoided the topic with John for the rest of the evening. But John proceeded to ask then got agitated when Alex wasn't giving him a proper reply. So Alex bounded off into the kitchen an hour later from the living room, he couldn't sit there and write with John provoking him into madness.

Alex grabbed the kettle and ran it under the faucet. He needed a drink, something to clear his mind. Placing it back on its stand, he flipped on the switch and stood against the countertop. He had his arms crossed, staring at the floor, watched his toes wriggle in his striped socks and breathed out heavily when he could hear John's footsteps emerge.

Just great.

Once John had joined him in the kitchen, Alex put up a hand to him and said, "Don't, I don't want another argument."

John frowned at him. "You won't give me an answer"

Then Alex sprang his head up, glowering at John. "Because I don't want to do this right now! I'm tired, I've got work to do, a tight deadline to finish!" Alex barked. John rolled his eyes. "All I want is to just grab a coffee, do some work, take a bath and go to bed. I'm not having another screaming match."
"It isn't me who's causing an argument, you are." John said back. "You're doing all the shouting, I only asked a question."

Alex inhaled sharply at him, then said, "You keep asking! Pushing me, you always do this when you don't get your own way. Baby, drop it. Please, drop it."

Then John was the one getting worked up. "No, I won't. Why did you say I was just your 'friend' though? Alexander, I thought we were real."

"And we are! John, we are." Alex snaps, then he looked regretful for a second. Alex goes to grab John's hand, he's rubbing circles with his thumb over the top of it. "I am serious about you... it's just -" Alex didn't know how to tell him.

He had doubts. How would John take it though.

There was silence between them.

The kettle continued to boil and it's rattling away there. Steam came puffing out.

Alex kept his eyes on their hands locked together.
As the kettle clicked in place, now ready and boiled. John dropped his hand away from Alex's.

"There's something you're keeping from me" John lets out quietly. Alex bites his tongue and then John's eyes harden on him. "Isn't there"

There was.
Alex didn't want to move in with him.

"I mean, your parents, they didn't even care. You say they're happy for us, still, I can see it in your eyes." John tells him, narrowing his own. "Something is wrong, you wouldn't lie for no reason. Not you, not with that big mouth of yours." Alex splutters at him and scoffed right in John's face at that.

John looks away from Alex for a second and he's raking a hand, stressfully, through his loose curls. "A 'friend' huh" John says sarcastically with a snort. "Wow"

Alex drops his shoulders and he's trying to grab John's hand again but John moves it away. He tries this twice and each time, nothing. John moves away from him and Alex shakes his head, annoyed.

"If anyone should be mad, it's me. You went behind my back, John. I told you I'd tell them when I felt ready, not rush it," Alex hisses. "Yet, you were so insistent on finding the perfect present, trying to act like someone you're not. I didn't want that - no. Not yet. I don't even... FUCK!" Alex shouts.

At this outburst John's eyes go like golfballs and he's furrowing his brow. "I was being polite! Sorry for making an effort."

"You still went behind my back! I told you before we left, not yet." Alex sighs.

John shot his eyes back at Alex and they showed hurt.

"They didn't mind!" John strains.

Alex scoffed.

"That isn't the point! John this is the thing - it's always what you want!"

Now it was John's turn to roll his eyes. Completely brushing off Alex's fury. "Alex, they didn't care. They're cool with it, they're happy for us. Me and you. Us! You weren't going to tell them, so, I did. Why is it such a big deal?"

"What don't you understand!" Alex shouts. "I keep repeating my fucking self! You went behind my back!"

John's face twisted. "So when would the time have been right? A year, down the line? Ten years?"

Alex could only laugh at that. John shoved him in the arm, Alex staggered back a bit. "Ten years..." Alex mumbled under his breath. "Sure"

John was looking angrier and angrier with him. Alex clenched the bridge of his nose and let out the heaviest sigh. John remained frowning at him. "I just didn't want to create a fuss over it all. I was thinking how I should tell them -"
"You're making a big deal out of nothing!" John retorts.

Alex puts his hands up at John in defence mode. They needed to chill. Alex breathed in and out, he had to calm it. Big time. John however, he was working himself up.

"It was just so sudden. Alright, look. This is the first time I've been with anyone else since, y'know. Eliza."

Then John's expression fell cold.

"Baby, look, it was tough for us all. She was a serious deal and then you come along -" Alex stopped midway before ending that sentence. John's glare cut through him, the iciness of it gave him chills. "Look, alright. This is the first serious relationship that I've had with a guy."

John's breathing turned that bit heavier. Alex watched his boyfriend's chest heave in and out. He didn't know what was to happen next and Alex couldn't be sure. John was a ticking time bomb, spontaneous and ready to blow up.

"The first?" John mutters out.

"Well, yeah" Alex said back.

Instantly Alex flinched when he saw the flames light up in John's eyes. "The hell! What, so, I'm some kind of fucking experiment? Is that what this is!!" John shouted. Alex backed up away from John as he flipped out.

"John! No! It isn't!" John's eyes narrowed at Alex. He didn't look convinced.

Alex wondered just how much of all this his nosey neighbours could hear. All the shouting and bawling was probably keeping them up. "John" Alex tries. "It's late, lets just go to bed and talk about this in the morning."

John wasn't having it.

"No! I don't want to talk about it then, I want to talk about it now. Right now. Are you using me?" John snapped. He grabs the kettle handle, fingers around the it were bright pink and had gone pale from the strain. Alex shook his head at John and scowled.

"Dammit, why are you always so -" Alex stopped mid-sentence. He threw his hands over the back of his head, clutching his bun tightly and he's looking up at the ceiling. Silently grilling. Alex was trying to keep it together, he didn't want to have a total go at John and upset him. Not his boyfriend.

"Go on!" John hisses. "You finish it, say it." It was almost as if John was daring him. Alex squinted at John, something he never does and John even had the nerve to look bewildered for a moment over it.

So just for the attitude and total nastiness, plus with Alex being tired too, he did. "You're so fucking difficult! Everything has to turn into an argument with you!" Alex boomed. John didn't budge and he remained grounded looking as blunt as ever. Alex continued his rambling.

"I tell you not to tell my parents anything, but, you do it anyway. I wasn't ready, Jesus - fuck it. It's always your way or no way. Now, you've got the audacity to start shouting the odds at me! You claim I'm using you, all because I said you're the first guy I've had a serious relationship with?" Alex babbled.
His own heart was pounding and he too was becoming red in the face. "How in the fuck... why do you even think like that?!"

John looked defeated for a moment. Only for a moment and Alex suspected there was something more to this. "Why?" He repeated firmly. "John"

But John gave no answer, he shrugged it off. "Doesn't matter why. Point is, Alexander. This better be serious, I can't be your toy."

Alex actually snorted and John looked murderous. "You're not!"

"I swear to god, Alexander. If you are using me, that's it. That is it. I will not be used -"

"Oh for fucks sake, you're not being used!"

"I am!"

"You're being ridiculous, John." Alex exasperated as he threw up his arms in a stress. John glowered at him for doing that and Alex saw how John's fingers clenched around the kettle's hand.

Alex didn't care, right now he had to get it all out. Whether John wanted to hear it or not, it was too bad.

Alex was tired of it all being turned on him. "Just grow up!"

"All I wanted was to meet your parents, get to know them and you said you tell them, tonight. You said you would! Then you changed your mind - I had to do it for you." John gritted out. "What was it again - oh wait. I'm apparently just your 'friend'."

And here they go again.

Alex heaves angrily and then exhaled sharply.

"And I'm sorry! But I just didn't feel ready. John, stop this. You're suffocating me!" Alex explained, trying to keep his voice calm, it ended up sounding frantic anyway. John didn't listen.

John scoffed. "Why though?!!"

He was pushing it.
So John wanted Alex to be truthful. Fine then. Alex was going to say it.

"Because even though I love you John, I don't know if this will even last!" Alex screamed.

However Alex soon regretted his words. That must've been John's breaking point because before he knew it John was grabbing the kettle and it went flying.

Then Alex's eyes went like saucers when John hurled it at him. Alex was swift enough to move out the way and it flew by him, with such a force, shattering against the wall and clattered on the tiled floor. Hot water went all over the place, some caught on Alex's feet and he's wincing at the burn.

That wasn't even the end of it either. "Like, hell, will I be your play thing!"
With wide worried eyes Alex looks to the mess on the floor and slowly he turns back to John. Alex could feel his whole body go numb, his palms are clammy and he's shitting it deep down.

Both of them panting heavily and Alex goes to say something, he can't. Nothing comes out which is a first. John sees him trying to and Alex waits for John to start screaming back. He doesn't though.

But Alex didn't expect John to then reach into the drawer beside him, rip it open and rumble inside where he grabbed out a chopping knife. John was heaving heavily, rabid like an animal and tears gathered in his eyes.

His face completely flushed in red, all of his freckles prominent and he's gritting down on his bottom lip. Clenching so hard.

Alex immediately bounced right to the other side of the kitchen, where the other door to the living room was as this happened. His entire soul felt as if it had been ripped from his body. John had a knife, now Alex was in turmoil on who that was going to be used on. If it was going to be himself or if John was going to start cutting himself again. It was a hit or miss.

As Alex tried to narrow down his heavy breathing, he realises that he's shaking. He hates that he is because this is John. He shouldn't have to be frightened, but he is.

And as much as he loved John but when John was out of control Alex knew he had to be so careful. This is what Alex was unsure about when it came to John. His worrisome impulses, the unknown and yet John wanted him to move together elsewhere. No chance.

Not after this. For now though, Alex would tackle that matter another day.
Gradually Alex found his voice again, he swallowed thickly, he can feel his hands shake and John was shaking too. "Honey" Alex began softly. "Put the knife down"

For a moment Alex kept stilled than still. He remained watching John fiddle with the knife in his hand and John looked as if he was thinking on it. His expression vacant, hazel eyes glassy and his hand shook. Alex came that closer to John, he knew it was stupid but if he did then maybe should might ease.


John did.
His wrath ended and it was as if the storm blown over from inside John. Alex found the courage to fully go over to him and as he did John finds it in himself to place the knife down on the counter top. "Alexander" John wept. He's breaking down.

John's in tears, they're rolling right out of him and down his freckled cheeks. Alex moves infront of him and he's using his palms to rid John's tears. As he did it only made John cry more and Alex flung his arms around John's neck. He's holding John close to him, tightly and worms his face into John's curls.

"Jack" Alex says sweetly. John's curls there in his face tickled him but Alex didn't mind. He rubs a hand up and down John's back "Hey, it's alright. Baby, it's alright."

"No - No! It isn't!" John sniffled. "I can't believe I just did that... I'm so, so sorry." John held on to the back of Alex's top, gripping it as he cried.

Alex hadn't ever heard John cry like this before. The small squeals and sobs. He sounded so much like a little boy, so scared and regretful. Alex felt bad but he knew he shouldn't though. It wasn't his fault but John here, in his arms, crying. Alex couldn't rid his own guilt.

He had done this to John.

Alex had made him cry.
"This is why I want you to get counselling. It'll help you." Alex whispers, he's now patting upside John. John secured himself around Alex more and the sobbing stopped. Though they remained holding one another.

"I could've hurt you -" John said back. "I wasn't going to do anything with that knife, not to you. No. Never." John gripped Alex and although John may not have intentionally wanted to hurt Alex. Alex could feel John's nails in his back.

“John -“ Alex cut in.

John hiccuped as he said over him, “I’d cut my own wrists open before ever hurting you!” He cried. Alex’s heart raced at that, it was so wrong. “I’d hurt myself for you -“

Alex gripped John harder, he shook him and sternly said, “No, dammit. No! You will not!” John was so intoxicated with his own sadness that he wasn’t making sense. It was scaring Alex. With the knife so close by still on the side there too. Alex eyed it as he held John.

He didn’t want John hurting himself for him regardless of everything. Ever.

"I swear! I would, for you. I’d do that!" John plead. Alex continued to shake his head, he felt his own eyes sting with tears.

“John, no. No.”

John spluttered into another sob. Tears peppering Alex’s neck as he cried into it.

"I’d die for you -“ John sniffled. “Don’t leave me. I want us to last!”

Alex couldn’t take anymore of this. His own heart was breaking. Dramatic as this was, Alex was in total shock and felt for John.
Another shaky sigh from Alex, "Listen - it's fine!"

"It's not, it's not. No. Alex, no. Oh god, oh god!" John cried. "I've ruined us!"

"You haven't!" Alex shouted, he was getting annoyed now. He just wanted John to listen. "You've not."

John continued to cry. "I'm so sorry, I love you. You're my life. You're the light of my life, Alex. I'm sorry."

His life. Alex's stomach churned at that - if only John knew the truth.

Alex hummed against him and roamed a hand in John's hair instead. "It's okay" It wasn't though.
They both knew that but to keep the peace, Alex just went along with this. "You're having an episode, it's okay. I know you didn't mean it."

Then John pulls slightly from Alex to look into his eyes, John's nose was bright red and his eyes, their usual pretty hazel hue were all pink and watery. His long lashes clamped and wet. Still just as beautiful though Alex thought. "You don't trust me anymore, do you"

At this Alex looked speechless and he shook his head at John after a quick pause. John didn't look confident one bit and Alex pulled him close again for another hug to calm him down. "I do, I just want you to get help. That's all."

"I will" John says, god, he sounded so helpless. It killed Alex. "You didn't mean that, did you? About us?

John looked into Alex's eyes deeply. His lips wobbling, sniffing, obviously wanting to hear that Alex had said that in the heat of the moment. When really, Alex did mean it.

"No, baby. I was just mad, I didn't mean it."

He hugged John again to calm him down. John seemed assured by it. For now this would do.

They moved into the living room after cleaning up the mess in the kitchen. Then once Alex had stripped John off out his clothes. They grabbed a bath together which consisted of John resting against Alex's chest, Alex soothing him and massaging his curly wet scalp.

A brief steamy session of kissing but nothing more. The mood wasn't really there tonight and Alex sorted John out when they got changed into their pyjamas. He had John sat on the end of his bed while he combed out his hair and carefully dried. Finished with a loving kiss on John's forehead, poke on the nose, both of them smiled and Alex held John from behind.

In bed that night both Alex and John were tucked together closely. Alex spooning John. The sounds of the city outside blared, the wind from outside howled and light pattering of rain hammered against the window. It was due to snow again through the night. Christmas was a few days away.

Alex had drifted in and out of sleep, he couldn't really settle. His feet still hurt from the hot water scalding his feet and plus a lot of things were swirling around his mind from the day. What had happened with John earlier stuck there. It wouldn't shift, not once. John losing it like that at him, throwing cups and launching knives nearly.
Alex wondered what it would've been like if John used that knife. Alex questioned if he would still be here, whether he would be in A&E tonight hooked up to a machine or would John be sat in a ward with stitches. It was horrible and Alex didn't know how much more of John's meltdowns he could take.

Unable to sleep Alex shifted from John, removing his arm from around his boyfriend's waist and Alex sat up. He's groggily scratching his neck and back while blinking away through weary vision. Alex looks out to the window, watches the raindrops scatter on his window, car headlights zoom past and brighten up the zoom for a split second. Alex flickers his attention then on John who was sleeping soundly there right beside him.

John's light snores were soothing, he always looked angelic when he slept. The prettiest thing Alex had ever seen when John was like this. His curls were all sprawled out in a mass mangled heap.

Alex could've sworn his hair had gotten even long since they had met. It was almost hitting near his waist. Alex reached for a lock of it, he twiddled it around his fingers and relished just how silky it felt. He twirled it around his finger and let it go, tiredly watched it spring back into its natural coil.

He looked over to his phone there on the nightstand and Alex pressed the button. While lit up the whole room and caused Alex to squint from the sudden brightness, he saw it was past two in the morning. He clicked it off and the room went back into darkness. Alex then lay back down and buried himself back into the covers. He turns on his side to John again and picked up another stand of John's hair.

Twisting, locking it around his fingers, Alex lost himself into his sea of thoughts. Just wondering about John and their future.

However the words slipped from Alex's mouth, whispering, "Who hurt you"

That's all he wanted to know. Who had hurt John to the point where he had gotten like this. John told him his father but Alex had a feeling it was something else. Something a lot worse.

Alex leant forward to the crook just between John's neck and shoulder so he could press a supple kiss against it. As he did Alex sat up, he couldn't sleep at all and he's shuffling off the bed carefully. Alex put the rest of the sheets over John, tucking him in and as he did, John squirmed slightly. He went back to sleep though and Alex gave a little sigh of relief when he did.

After taking care of John he then slipped on his old hoody that was slung over his dress. Slid back into his slippers and quietly left the bedroom. Alex shut the door ajar and retorted over to the living room. Alex made himself a quick black coffee, flicked on the tv for some background noise on low and put on his laptop. He decided if anything, he would just get on with some writing.

There wasn't anything else better to do and Alex really needed to get on with the next chapter of his book. Alex didn't really like to say but John often got in the way of his work. He wanted and tried to make his writing a priority but John took over. Often shoved his laptop away and captured his lips as a distraction, moved books he was reading away from him and sat on his lap. Alex couldn't ever seem to get break away from him.

He was just grateful he had some time now to get on with what he needed to do for his deadline. Alex did manage to get on with some writing in the end, his fingers rocketing around his keyboard, words filled up his pages and after two black coffees. Alex saw in the corner of his screen that it was nearly five. He had been writing the entire night. That was when Alex decided to turn in.
John wouldn't be up until late anyway and Alex was starting to feel the tiredness hit him. Despite all the coffees he had funnelled down. So he was putting his laptop away, all his notes tucked up inside his journal and switching off the TV. That was when Alex saw John's sketchbook stuffed down inside the sofa. A cushion hit it away but Alex had saw it just peaking out that little bit.

Now Alex knew John didn't really like him snooping around his sketchbook. Alex didn't know why, unless John shown him himself then it was fine. But if Alex were to pick it up, unannounced and without John knowing, he got mad.

Alex placed down his mug back on the coffee table, he looked over to the hall and nothing. John was still asleep. Good.

He knew he shouldn't but Alex wanted to see, it was his turn to be nosey for a change and Alex shuffled out the sketchbook. It was heavy, filled with tons of drawings. John had told Alex that he'd had this particular sketchbook, his favourite one, for years. Alex could tell. It was all battered, its brown cover worn and scuffed. The binding that kept it held together had thinned throughout the years.

Slipping it off from over the cover, Alex took another look over towards the hallway and instead he grabs his mug, decides to go take this into the kitchen instead. In the kitchen Alex throws his mug in the sink and then lays out the sketchbook on the countertop.

He's flipping through the pages and for the most part everything is random drawings. Beautiful ones of landscapes, Alex presumed they were near where John lived. All detailed, shaded perfectly, John had the patience of a saint when it come to steadiness with his work. Alex certainly wouldn't mind John's artwork on the covers of his books.

That's if they even lasted long enough.
Alex pushed back that dark though and returned to flicking through the pages of random sketches, small comics, flowers until he saw the sketch of a face he didn't recognise. A man who looked at least thirty, glasses on, dark hair, fairly good looking. There were a few drawings of him and drawings that had Alex's eyes almost falling out their sockets. Nude sketches of this particular man.

He kept popping up on most of the midsection of John's sketchbook. Alex saw the date in the corner and these were drawn a few years back. That meant John would have still been a teenager at most. Then Alex stops at one page and he stares blankly at the wall.

John would've been a minor.

Alex bit his bottom lip hard. That meant John had been preyed on, he'd had a sexual relationship no doubt with this man. Of course, he didn't know the full story but Alex knew. He just knew. It made his stomach wrench and Alex felt like he was going to bring up his coffee.

He knew he should stop - really. He should but Alex continued. He needed to see more, get to the truth of this. Alex flicks the pages back and forth, this man, Alex could feel his hands start to shake. Instantly he was questioning the relationship between him and John. It must've been sexual or unless John had him in for still life practice - no. Alex shook his head to himself. It was more than that because John had small heart doodles around one sketch of this guy.

It made Alex feel sick to his stomach.

That was when Alex saw it, this guy had a name and just below wrote underneath yet another sketch of this man, sat down, legs spread with his cock out. A smirk playing on this man's lips. Alex shivered at the sight of it all, of this, Francis.
But that wasn't even the worst part. Alex crumpled his face when he uttered out "What in the fuck... John."

Alex stood back from this page and it gave him goosebumps. Alex could feel the hairs on his arm stand up, his brow was furrowed in confusion. He hadn't expected the series of bright and happy looking drawings of this Francis to come to an end, where he's swinging on a noose. Right next to him, another. A woman it looked like - or more like, a girl.

"Traitors" Alex read out from just underneath the sketch.
All Alex wanted to know after that though, was, why exactly? With that Alex couldn't look at another page. He closed up the sketchbook, slid its binder back on over it and he's flicking off the kitchen light. Racing back to the living room, shoving the sketchbook back down the cushion of the sofa. Then he's heading back to bed with what he knew.

John there, hunched up under the bedding, dreaming peaceful, light snores filling the room and as Alex slips back into bed. He hates himself for it but this is the first time where he can't stand to be in the same room as John.

Alex knew then and there, they really weren't going to last.

Chapter End Notes

OH GOD

It's all going to shit. Whoops.

Alex is finally realising his baby, precious, John, isn't all that innocent. He really isn't and it'll get worse.

Thank you so much for the support and kudos on this story! It means a lot! As always, most appreciated you guys <3 xxxx
Over the next couple of days Alex had been on edge with John since coming back from his parents place.

To make it worse Eleanor had been phoning him non-stop and Alex had to take the call when John wasn't around. That meaning Alex leave his apartment to go over to a local convenience store. Just so he can even make a phone call without suspicion.

John's mother was checking in on them and Alex apologised for not tuning in sooner to her. He told her everything was well, that John couldn't talk right now because he was busy. Alex wished her a merry christmas and to have a lovely new year. Phone down, sorted. Alex picked up a few things from the store just to make it look like he'd actually been. Alex threw John a packet of chips to lighten the mood, he smiled at Alex and went back to watching some movie.

Alex stood there with his hands on his hips for a moment. He looked down at the floor, so much was running through his mind. Alex shouldn't be lying about it all. He sighs softly to himself and then looks up back at John. John who was busy sketching, watching some christmas film and seemed content enough. Alex bit his lip, scratched his nape and went over to join him.

The rest of their night was fairly relaxed, a good hot bath, tons of movies, food and drinks. It was times like this when they were chilled, where Alex forgot about all the hell that had gone on. However it also made him zoom out into a separate part of his headspace where he remembered it all.

Tantrums, the meltdowns, the knives, the kettle being launched at him, John's mental problems, his control and everything Alex had seen in that sketchbook of his. Alex eyed it as John scribbled away next to him on the sofa. That thing needed burning.

An hour or so later John and Alex were talking until Alex brought up a touchy topic from the day before. Mostly about the conversation that they had at his parents dinner table. Alex still couldn't believe it and John had never told him beforehand.

"I can't believe you used to shoot animals" Alex shook his head disapprovingly. "With your father of all people"

John gave Alex the side-eye then he nudged Alex before resting his head down against his shoulder. "Well, he used to force me and my brothers to go with him. Said it would 'man us up' and besides, Alex. We're not the first to do it"

"It's barbaric" Alex commented.

"They're only animals" John added.

The chills ran so cold up Alex's spine. He hoped he hadn't heard right but Alex knew he had. Alex
felt stone cold, he was trying to get out words, anything. He looked down at John there against him with the most worried eyes.

So they weren't getting a puppy then. God no.

Alex wasn't sure he was hearing right.
He was.

He actually was.

Whilst gaping like a goldfish, Alex babbled out with, "They're still - John. Baby, no. They're defenceless!"

"So, what?" John shrugged next to him. Sounding completely unfazed. Alex felt a lump form at the back of his throat, he wondered just what he was dealing with here. John, he man he loved, basically admitting he would hurt a harmless animal just for the sake of it and actually trying to justify it too. Unbelievable. "Man has been hunting them down for centuries. We needed them to survive, we had to kill them. It makes sense."

Alex spluttered in defence back with, "John, it isn't the ice age, we've no need to hunt them for sport. You and your dad killed for something to do -"

Then John is rolling his eyes at him and looking away. Something he always did when he didn't want to hear Alex's side of anything. Alex felt crushed by this, he was actually devastated.

A sigh came from John, he's putting down his sketchbook and crossing his arms.

"You don't get it, Alexander. If you tried it, you'd know the feeling. You get this rush... feels good."

At this Alex tried getting up because he couldn't stomach anymore of this. But John held him down there in place. "Don't be so uptight - ain't like I do it anymore. Is it? And I won't do it ever again if
it makes you this uncomfortable."

Another low blow. Alex frowned, he hated when John tried to pin this on him. All his wrong doings were somewhat Alex's fault and how Alex should never be making John feel at least a shred of guilt. But no, there was nothing. Alex stared at John, his eyes searching to find something within him that may come to some reasoning that killing - anything, was wrong.

But Alex's gut twisted in knots. He had a bad feeling.

"Did you not ever just... feel awful?"

John looked back at Alex. Their eyes locking and for the first time, Alex swore he didn't see John. Not anymore.

"Strangely, no. I felt nothing."

Well, that confirmed everything.

With a curt nod Alex drifted his attention back to the television, John watched as he did so. Alex
felt John's overbearing burning stare literally singe through him. Like a flame against cloth, it was heated, scared him.

Silence ticked away between them.

The TV was playing some re-run from the nineties. Alex wasn't really paying it any attention, instead his mind was on John's words. Shocking, so very shocking.

Alex tried ignoring and blocking John out but the sooner as he tried that was when John asked, "Are you scared of me now?"

He could see John's piercing glare in the corner of his eye. Waiting.

Alex chose his words, wisely. He wasn't quite terrified of John but Alex was sensing a lot wrong with John. He was very damaged, broken and needed mending. But that wasn't going to stop Alex from being with John. He needed John just like John needed him. They could get through this rough patch.

"Alex" John repeated quietly.

Yes, Alex was. Partly.

But he gulped down that ball of uncertainty and turns back to John. Alex did try not to look so shaken up and with his boyfriend staring at him like a kicked dog. Alex felt bad. He knew he shouldn't feel guilty but he did.

"You're terrified of me" John confirmed, this time he's turning from Alex and he lifts himself up off Alex. John sits back on the sofa and looked away. "Knew it. Since the other night, when we, y'know - You've been weird with me."

There was some silence. Until John broke it.

"I do have a conscious, you know. I'm not... a total monster."

Alex breathed in deeply and exhaled. He was sick of them going in circles.

"It's not that. I'm not scared of you" Alex tells him. John shot his gaze to Alex sharply there in the corner of his eyes.

Alex tried not to even let that get to him but it did.

"Look -" and Alex is shuffling closer to John. "I think your outbursts can be controlled with help. This is what I've been telling you from the beginning, you're coming back to New York. Alright. So we can get you that help. I'll even come with you! Me and you, I'll be right at your side."

John's eyes squinted that bit. "You will?"

"Course, Jesus. Of course I will." Alex moved over to swarm an arm around John's shoulder and pulled him closer. "Always, I told you this. Shit, I'll even make an appointment for you today. We can get you sorted out, it'll be the best thing for you. Jack."

John smiled, he takes Alex's hand and kisses the top of it.
"Love of my life" John murmured.

Alex's heart flipped.
But his stomach dropped.

When the Christmas party a work friend of Alex's was hosting landed the following Friday night over at this building. Alex ushered John to get ready quicker since he was hellbent on being difficult.

John was still lounging around on the bed barely even dressed while Alex was rushing around getting ready. This party was a big deal to Alex since Lafayette had told Alex that some potential clients for jobs would be there. People Lafayette knew in high places, other business people he worked with and Alex had invited more of his friends over there tonight.

Alex could hardly wait.

As Alex was straightening out his shirt in the mirror he darts his eyes over to John who was lay on the bed, he had his skinny jeans on but remained topless. John was busy playing around on Alex's phone on some game to really bother finishing himself off.

Rolling his eyes, Alex was really losing it with John. He was.

Everything with him for the past couple of days had been a chore, John whining, John frowning when he didn't get his own way with something or making a sly dig or two over god knows what.

Alex was honestly sick of it. It was awful to say but Alex couldn't wait for Christmas to be over, the faster it was, the quicker he could toss John back to South Carolina.

Alex really needed a break from John because he was becoming overbearing.

"Uh, Jack" Alex calls softly, he darts his eyes on John there over on his bed in the mirror. Alex
fixes his bun as he does. John lets out a lengthy 'mmm' in response. Alex rolls his eyes again, John's concentration too far gone on whatever he was playing to really give him the time of day.

"Baby, you gotta finish getting ready. We've gotta leave soon, the cab will be here in the next ten minutes." said Alex.

Alex finished double knotting his hair tie and frowns when John doesn't answer.

"John" Alex said firmly.

This time John looks over at him, he's brazen with attitude and looking at Alex like it's effort. "Yeah?"

Then Alex turns to him, his bun is tight and neat. "Shirt, shoes, hair, now" He ordered.

And John sighs, he chuckles in Alex's face as he does. It irritated Alex as he did. "Alright, alright, I heard you."

"If you heard me, why don't you answer? I swear, you're trying to piss me off deliberately." Alex snapped. He's walking towards John, snatches his phone back and John lets out a small 'hey!' as he did. Alex paid no mind, he didn't care. This was his phone and his party they were going to.

"Such a mood" John muttered.

Alex shot him a look for that.

John rolls his own eyes, sits up in a sluggish way and he stretches quickly with a yawn. "Why do we have to go to this stupid thing anyway?"

Alex snorts at him, he's checking the time as he did. "Because I want to and if you don't, John. You can stay behind, I really don't care at this point."

John gives Alex a sharp look, as he says, "Seriously? Ugh, god, Alexander. You've been so, off with me, today, yesterday. Wait - is this still about the animal thing?"

Partly.
Alex had been annoyed over John's attitude to hunting and living critters. But it wasn't just that, the vibe he got off John most days. The attitude, everything was adding up slowly.

It wasn't healthy or normal and to be with someone like that, Alex knew the toxicity that John had was only going to make their relationship worse.

"Just get dressed" Alex muttered, not even looking at John anymore.

Just to push his luck, John, cheekily asks, "Can I have the phone back?"

Sighing, Alex then says, "The cab will be here in ten, John, move it."

Then Alex is walking off and grabs his jacket in the process from over his wardrobe door, as he did, Alex slipped out of his room leaving John fuming there alone.

As soon as Alex had left John by himself, in the matter of minutes John was dressed, ready for the night. He came out of the bedroom with a bitter expression, glaring at Alex while doing the last button of his white shirt. Shirts always suited John well, the sleeve rolled up on him, some tidy pants and shoes. He smelt nice too.

Alex dropped his eyes on John's sleeves rolled up the way they were. It never bothered him before but for the first time, Alex wished John would hide his scars. It wasn't that Alex hated them but sometimes, they did bother Alex. Two of them Alex had seen John create back when he had his meltdown after the bookshop incident in Charleston. Just before they came to New York.

The others, well, Alex didn't know what had caused each and John had told him but it was a coping method for him when he was younger. But Alex had noticed earlier today, one looked fairly new just on John's wrist. Alex hadn't seen him do that one until now. It caused his stomach to churn. He didn't want John cutting himself here in his apartment.

Then the guilt would flood in. Alex blamed himself for making John do that. Perhaps it was their
argument the other day which caused John to do it. Alex didn't know. He didn't want to know.

But the scars had never completely grossed him out up until last night. John rolling up against him in bed, half asleep while Alex read. Alex noticed John's arm around him, lay there on top of the duvet and for the very, first, time. Alex hadn't liked the sight of them. He hated how he even found them 'gross'.

He could never tell John that. Ever. Telling him that would break John and Alex knew how much it meant to John knowing Alex accepted them.

This was a problem and Alex knew it. Everyone had scars, visible and invisible. But to find his own boyfriend's past and grief written there on his arms completely vile. Alex realised then, he had hit a new low with his relationship.

It wasn't good.

Therefore Alex couldn't tell John to cover them up. He was aware people would stare tonight at them, John may even be questioned and judged. Alex figured they'd just have to deal with it incase anyone was an asshole.

As they got ready to leave, Alex noticed one of John's curls were loose out of his bun and when Alex offered to tuck it back in for him just as they were leaving. John practically bit Alex's head off. Shoving his hand away and muttering, nastily, how he could do it himself. Alex had bounced back like he'd just been scalded. Eyes wide, slightly scared and baffled.

So Alex batted his eyes in astonishment, slipped into his jacket, grabbed his phone, keys and wallet. Told John the cab was waiting and away they went.

The Christmas party took place at a center inside one of the office buildings downtown. Alex's friend was hosting it, Alex had invited his friends and they had planned to all meet up. A lot of other people Alex worked with were there too.

Once they arrived, Alex paid the driver and trudged towards the building. Him and John hadn't spoken much since leaving the apartment. John lingered behind Alex, purposely, showing his sore
side and Alex left him to it. He was honestly so sick of worrying about John and his feelings. Alex wanted to have some fun tonight.

Already outside Alex recognised a couple of the guys and women who were having a smoke at the doors. Alex let on to them, laughing and joking with them. John just remained by Alex's side, casting half-assed smiles at Alex's colleagues and cut looks. Showing no interest in them at all. John had his hands in his pockets, bored as ever.

Alex didn't even bother introducing John, he just gave him a nudge in the shoulder and guided him into the building. They took the elevator with a couple of other people, Alex focussed on whoever they were and spoke to them, rather than John. Alex could feel John's burning gaze drill into him as he did.

It always felt controlling when John did that. Like he was trying to get inside Alex's mind or grab Alex's attention, give him a glare or so, before actually saying what was on his mind. It always made Alex feel so guilty. It was awful.

Although John became clearly pissed when Alex wasn't giving him any of that attention.

But when Alex had tried to be nice, John threw it back at him. The elevator opened and out they all went into the hallway. Music was bumping, some festive decorations were hung, there was this huge christmas tree, a real one, at the very end of the hall just by where the bathrooms were. All lit up, sparkling beautiful luminous colours.

People were in and out of the hall, laughing, joking with their drinks. Alex just followed where people were going, John right behind him and they were led into the main hall.

It was busy, really busy. There was a bar, people sat having drinks, a handful dancing. Lights blaring, christmas tunes and anything from the nineties playing. It was great.

Alex's face was brighter, his eyes were planets when he saw his good friends right by the door waiting. Hercules, Lafayette, Peggy and Sally were there too. Alex was silently screaming and so glad he could hang out with them, away from John for the duration of the night. He needed a break.

John was too far busy looking around, although when he caught up to Alex's side when Alex was busy giving his friends big hugs. Alex was eccentric, he looked happier than he had been in days, laughing, smiling away with them all.

There in the background, John watches them all. He stares Alex's friends up and down like they're dirt. He doesn't like it. Alex looked like he was happier, better, without him. John's clutching his fists inside his pockets. Still, he managed to hide his irritation. He strolls over, cockily, smiling and he barges into their circle.
He was not going to be ignored.

And if Alex was going to do this to him, act cold and reject him tonight. John had other plans in store for his boyfriend.

John bumps into Alex from behind, he looks up at all of them and everyone looked confused. Obviously having no idea who John is at all. John gave them his trademark lopsided boy grin, the one that always won people over, the dimples included. He gives a friendly, "Hey"

Alex feels himself stiffen.

He prayed that John wouldn't start drama.

As John then clears his throat, John purposely leans into Alex's back, he palms a hand just on Alex's ass, squeezing it teasingly and pressed a soft kiss on Alex's cheek.

Alex can feel himself burn up. He wanted to scream.

Then John looked up at Alex's friends, all their faces stunned and playfully, says with a grin, "You finally gonna introduce me to your friends?"

Alex corners his head at John, their eyes meet and Alex can see it in John. He's waiting and he's not pleased that he's gone ignored up until now. John was relentless.
But Alex made it his business to narrow his eyes ever so at John and let him know, he wasn't pleased about this. John continued to smile, acting like everything was okay. So he squeezes Alex's ass again, pushing him to do so.

So shakily, Alex heaves a soft breath and puts on another smile.

He figured he should just go with this but later Alex was telling John off.

Alex then wraps an arm around John's waist, he brings John in properly so that he was in the friend circle and rubs his hand up and down John's lower back.

"Yeah, guys, uh, this is John. My boyfriend." Alex tells them.

Then Alex is introducing each of them to John. With a low hum at each of their names, John looked far from interested and squeezed at Alex's ass again. Alex curls an arm around him and swats John's hand, plus shifts slightly too. John got the message, he just chose to go against it. Alex didn't know how much more of this he could take.

They're all letting out a mewl of excitement and Lafayette is the first to ask, "So, is this the young man you have been telling me about Mon Ami?"

"Yeah" Alex said nodding. "He's the one" Alex confirmed. "The one and only..."

Then John rudely snorts with, "Well, yeah. Who else?"

Alex sees Lafayette's grin falter slightly at that remark. Alex swats John lightly from behind.

Hercules is next to start questioning John, "Wait so, how did y'all meet?"

"I went down to Charleston, remember? My dad put me up for that job as a caretaker. John, uh, he was the one I was looking after. We met, hit it off." Alex told them. Everyone let out a soft 'aw' at this fact.

"That's so cute!" Peggy squealed, loudly, she's looking up at John and beaming. "He's so pretty too! Damn, Alex. You're lucky."

John didn't hide the roll of his eyes, "He is" he told Peggy and John pulls Alex closer to him. This time it was his arm around Alex. Alex could feel the force of John's arm tightening around him too. He didn't like it. "He's the only man I want. I always tell him this."

Lafayette chuckled, "My goodness, you are smitten, non? Say, Mon Ami -"

"Laurens" John added swiftly. "John Laurens"

Alex glared at John. He didn't like how John had just cut Lafayette right off like that. It was so rude.

"Ah, right, okay. It is nice to finally meet you. But may I ask, how old are you?" Lafayette asks, curiously.

Hercules nodded, he takes a swig of his beer before saying, "Yeah, you look pretty you dude"

Peggy nods too.

Alex sighs, he wanted the floor to devour him. This was all so awkward and again, it was all about John now.
"I'm twenty-one, I turn twenty-two next month" John tells them.

"Aw he's a baby!" Peggy cooed. John casts her a sarcastic smile, one Alex knows well and he's trying to get out of John's grasp. It isn't working though.

"Mm, you are very young." Lafayette added. "How I wish I was twenty-one once more!"

Hercules laughed along with him. John watches them blankly before laughing with them and saying, "Yeah, I mean damn. With all the frogs legs, snails and horse meat, you'd think you French would have some eternal ageing mechanism and shit."

It was like a pin had just dropped in a silent room. Only except the room was loud as hell.

That did it.

Immediately Alex shot John a look.

At this Lafayette stopped laughing, Hercules's eyes were wide and Peggy snorted aloud with a laugh of her own. Alex elbowed John in the side, John winced and Alex is released from his hold.

Then Alex is fuming, he was lethal, Alex's breathing had gone heavy, because that was so unnecessary. All Lafayette had done was be friendly and John had to go making nasty comments. Alex couldn't understand why John had to always be so mean to people, if it wasn't others, it was himself and Alex could have to go an hour with John nitpicking or doing something to make him feel inadequate.

As usual.

This was usual now.
Alex was sick of it.

"John" Alex muttered, glaring his boyfriend down, while trying to keep the peace with a smile wasn't an easy thing to do.

John looked like he didn't know what he'd done wrong.

Then Alex turns to his Lafayette and goes back to his bubbly false act. "Ah, take no notice. Baby boy here, he says the wildest shit. Say - Hey, Laf what're you having to drink? Peg, Herc?" Alex needed to change the topic and fast.

"I've already got this still dude" Hercules holds up his pint.

Peggy blurts out, "I'll have one of those Christmas cocktails she's having over there! They look fuckin' bomb!" Alex glanced over to where Peggy was pointing. He shuddered at the thought of drinking something that neon red, it looked full of sugary and Alex was getting cavities just thinking about it.

Just as John was about to say what he wanted, Alex spoke over him, "Hey, Laf, come over with me to the bar -" John frowned at Alex and then at Lafayette when he walked past him to his boyfriend. John glared at the pair walking off. Alex made it his business to snappily say, behind him, " - Yeah, I'll get you a Sam Adams. John. I know."

That left John alone with Hercules and Peggy. They could deal with his hating ass, because Alex was going to loose it if he was around John for too long tonight.

Even at the bar from across the room in crowds of people. Alex could see John staring their way in the corner of his eye.

As Alex and Lafayette caught up, Alex apologising for John about John's comment. Lafayette had
laughed it off but that wasn't the point. Alex wasn't having John, some kid he'd been fucking and dating for a few months, start to ruin close friendships with people he'd known for years. Since school.

He just wasn't dealing with this anymore.

As the night went on and Alex actually enjoying himself.

Alex had been mostly John free.

He didn't know where John was or what he was up to. Alex didn't care. They spent to much time together anyway and for John to mingle with new people wouldn't kill him.

So while sat at the bar joking around with Lafayette, Peggy and Hercules, Angelica had arrived. She's brought her new man, some British guy called John with her over to them.

They're all having a good time, Alex liked Angelica's man, he was cool. They took some group selfies together, Alex at the front holding the camera as he's stood on two chairs, everyone else behind him. Raising their drinks, laughing, pulling faces.

Alex got down off the chairs belly laughing over something crude Hercules had just said and got a playful nudge in the side off Lafayette. Alex almost spilling his beer all over himself, but he's laughing it off.

Carefree, loose, happy.

That's when Alex sees it, as his laughter dies down and Alex notices John.

John chatting away with his colleague. Jefferson.
Fucking Jefferson.

Thomas bastard Jefferson.

Alex's blood pressure went up and he's gripping his glass in annoyance. It was one thing seeing his boyfriend getting cosy with another man but when it was someone Alex could hardly stand, loathe to death. That was different.

He watched them both. John was stood against the wall in the corner, crowds of people passed his view as he stared. Jefferson, with his overbearing height, he was hanging over John like a bad raincloud. Smirking away, drinking his shitty martini and John had a different drink. Not the Sam Adams Alex had bought him earlier. He had something else, Alex assumed John was now letting Jefferson buy him drinks.

Great.
No, it wasn't. It wasn't okay.

Alex didn't like the way Jefferson was staring at John. He hated the way John was looking up at him, that dimpled smile he only ever gave Alex.

Peggy was trying to say something to him but Alex blocked her out.

Before he knew it, Alex left everyone, Peggy and Lafayette looking clueless. They asked where Alex was going but Alex went off into the sea of people. He's barging past people, irritation fixated on his features.

Alex wasn't thinking when he trudged right over to them both in the corner, Alex noticed Jefferson's friend Madison not far from them talking to some girl. Alex didn't care about him, he's more bothered about these two.

"The fuck" Alex muttered, mostly to himself.

He spoils whatever is going on between them, it enrages Alex more when he sees John is letting Jefferson lay a hand there on John's lower back, it was sliding down too. He sees John bite his lip, it's overly friendly, too much, far from politeness. Alex scowls at it.

As it happens, John looks directly at Alex.
Oh, Alex's blood was boiling.

That is when they both realise Alex is there and Jefferson practically sneers in Alex's direction.

"Hamilton" Jefferson sighs. "Is there a problem?"

Alex scoffed at him and then shoots his gaze at John.

"Yeah there is" John is looking around awkwardly, fidgeting with the frosted label on his bottle and looking back at Jefferson. Alex is annoyed more by that. "John, look at me. Don't look at this prick."

"I beg your fucking pardon" Jefferson spat.

Alex glared at Jefferson, hissing out, "He's my boyfriend, get your hand off him and fuck off."

Just as Jefferson is about to snap back, John steps in this time and he's turning towards Alex, moodily, frowning at him as he did. Alex frowned right back, he couldn't believe how John was reacting to all of this. As if this was okay.

"Alexander, I was just talking to Thomas. There's no need to be horrible to him." Alex's eyes were like basketballs. John was really standing up for Jefferson and admitting, practically, that having another guy all over him was fine.

Alex narrowed his eyes at John. Jefferson is a fart in the wind at this point. He's grabbing John by the arm, pulling him away from Jefferson and John is yelping for him to let go. Alex doesn't listen though. He pulls John right over to the other side of the room just near the entrance. They're alone, just them two. No one else.

John shrugged himself out of Alex's hand, glowering and snapping, "What the hell! Why did you do that?!"

"Are you trying to ruin my night?" Alex hisses. "I'm pretty sure that you are"

"What?" John says, fluttering his eyed like he's somewhat shocked. Alex shakes his head, he couldn't believe this. John was acting like he didn't know.

"Come off it, baby, come off it. You go off with another guy, fucking Jefferson as well. No one else, of course. Yet it had to be that asshole -"

John rolls his eyes, "The guy you don't like from work?"

"Yes!" Alex cried. "Him! The one I always tell you about! The guy I bitch about frequently! Him!"

"I didn't know!" John responds, angrily. "How the fuck was I supposed to know that was him?!"

"Oh, stop. You would've asked his name, you knew alright. Yet you did it anyway. He was all over you like a motherfucking octopus! Then, I got you trying to make me jealous, don't pretend I didn't see you staring at me the whole time as you did. John, I saw you. You wanted me to see -"

John rolls his eyes, "You're making shit up"

"I'm not!"

Then John was walking from him, Alex pulls John back by the back of his shirt. "Get off"
"No, you wanted my attention. You've got it." Alex quietly muttered. John huffed, he's looking back over in Jefferson's direction. Alex tugged him again.

"You've been weird with me all night, you didn't want me around. So I found someone else to talk to! Get over it." John tells him. Alex felt himself go numb, John wasn't wrong. He had done that. "I'm not going to stand around being ignored by you and your friends. Screw that."

Alex hurtfully squints at John, his mouth gaped for a moment, John remained staring blankly at him. He shrugged at Alex before turning his heels. "John, honey, wait" Alex calls out, softly.

He feels terrible.

"What, Alex" John groaned. "What?"

Then Alex takes John by the hand. John drops his eyes to it, flicks them back up to Alex. He's impatient and waiting.

"I know I shouldn't act -"

But all of a sudden Alex was cut off.

He hears a voice, a familiar sweet, humble voice call his name.
"Alexander" It wasn't John using his full name this time.

John looks over in the direction it came from and his eyes go hard as stone.

Alex turns and looks back to see who John is staring at. That's when he sees her and when Alex does, his breath hitches.

It had been so long since Alex had set eyes on her, Liza, his Eliza.
Alex forgets about everything with John. It's gone, he isn't angry anymore or jealous. Right now his mind is elsewhere.

She hadn't changed all that much only her hair had been cut shorter to her shoulders. No longer drafting down her back, it was styled nicely at her shoulders. Thick burly pin straight hair. As gorgeous as ever. Her dark almond eyes, small heart-shaped face, little pink pearly lips and uppity small nose. Alex felt his insides go to mush at the very sight of her.

He shouldn't really but he stared much longer than he would've liked. Then again how could he not, they had history, too much history and she was beautiful. Always the elegant, charming little miss.

"Alexander" Eliza calls gleefully.

She immediately breaks out into a full out grin, her white teeth sparkling and eyes smiled along too. Her face was a summers day. Alex automatically smiled back, he couldn't not. His heart clattering in his chest, he bit his tongue and held out his arms for her. Almost like magnets they collided, Eliza wrapping her arms gently around him.

Both of them at the very same height, it had always been a bit of a joke to the pair of them. But had its advantages when it did come to certain things - sensual things.

"Liza" Alex says back, he chuckles as he does. His big brown eyes wide, glittering at the sight of her. "Damn, you look good. You're doing good."

Eliza bats his shoulder softly as she pulls away giggling. "Oh, Alexander. Sweet talking as always. But thank you." She said to him, their eyes lingering and the heat is there. It's always going to be there Alex realises and he has to douce out the flames. Rid any feelings left he had of her. They were gone, almost, not completely.

Alex steps away from her, shoves his hands in his pockets and Eliza gets the hint.

"I got told off Angie and Peggy that you were here! I tried to find you earlier." She chirped.

She backs away slightly too, still smiling that dimpled smile and awkwardly laughing. "You -" Eliza takes him in some more. Alex's face is burning and his smile falters, it goes softer. "You look well"

"This is John"

John stares at Eliza for a couple of seconds, blankly. Alex watches his boyfriend carefully, he's sharp and Alex sees that look in John's eyes. The vacant look his eyes have when he sees something or hears something he doesn't like. Alex knew John didn't like Eliza or the fact that she had just interrupted them both.

Alex has long figured this out and he knew for a fact that John immediately doesn't care too much for Eliza.
Right off the fucking bat. He isn't fond of her. Still, Alex hadn't been all that fond of John and Jefferson either. Oh well, Alex thought. Too bad.

It wasn't even just now, meeting her. John always stiffened or went cold as ice when she was brought up. Then played off how it was fine, totally fine.

It wasn't.

John wasn't fooling anybody.

Then out of nowhere John bursts into one of his sweetest smiles. "Eliza" John says, he sounds too nice. "Nice to finally meet you, Alex has told me a great deal about you."

Eliza being Eliza just breaks out into a toothy pearly white grin and let out a warm, "Hello! Oh, so you're John? Alex has told me all about you too. Aren't you lovely!" She beamed. "Wow, Alexander -" Alex see's John's mouth twitch at the way she addresses his full name.

Only John ever seemed to do that these days and it annoyed Alex. John seemed to forget Eliza came before him. "He's so handsome! You are, John. You're stunning!"

John finds it in him to grin that bit wider at her although his eyes were a colder shade than what they usually were. John's body language was slower, his smile wasn't at all genuine and his whole demeanour was off-putting. Alex didn't like it one bit and hoped Eliza wasn't sticking around too long.

"Aren't you just... adorable" John cooed, it's all false. While Alex could tell Eliza was nothing but genuine and sweet. He knew John. "Thank you, you're very sweet."

Pfft.
Oh, Alex could see through him clearer than a window. John was never that lovely, it was too sweet, too tooth-rottingly sweet. Alex bit at his lip and bore his eyes into John wishing he would just drop the fake ass act.

Eliza and John chat for a couple of minutes. Eliza asking John all about Charleston and John gave her subtle answers, nothing too detailed. Alex figured he was being lighthearted but John wasn't being his actual self. Just enough to palm her off so she would get bored and go away.

John never asked Eliza anything about herself. He didn't want to know. He wasn't interested and John knew enough anyway about the miscarriage. Alex figured Eliza wouldn't appreciate it if she knew John was aware about it.

But John played it nice with her. He wasn't mean or sarcastic like he had been with his friends. Alex knew John thought little of her anyway. It really made Alex wonder just what was going on in John's mind. What the deal was.

Eliza and Alex spoke until she got called over by a gang of her girlfriends. They hugged before parting ways, Alex didn't miss the lingering touch of Eliza's hand as they parted. It wasn't flirtatious - just loving. Eliza was like that all the time. Alex was still special to her and she was to him.

John didn't let it go unnoticed either. He bared knives at their hangs laced together like that. As she ran off to her friends that was when John inched back over to Alex.

Alex mentally cursed. He knew a storm was coming.

Once Eliza had gone John stood closer to him and snaked an arm around his waist. John held him there, Alex could feel John move his head just above his shoulder, a pair of lips tickled his ear and John whispered, "It's just us now again, finally. What were you going to say before she butted in? I won't lie though, I didn't think she would be so plain looking"

Alex forgets John's question and cut his eyes at him. "What?"

He pushes John away and Alex sees the way John looked at him, that bit of hurt there on his face. But Alex didn't care.

John shrugged. "Well, she sorta is. You go on about her like she's a supermodel. Damn, was I wrong." John snorts at Alex's face, it's a mixture of hurt and annoyance. "Oh c'mon, stop with that face -" and John is snickering, meanly and he's jokingly gone to pull at Alex's cheek and he's moving in to peck Alex on the lips.

But John had the shock of his life when Alex pushed him out the way and he moved past him. John's mouth goes open ajar and he looked pained for a moment. Alex never did this to him, up until tonight. Everything had been a disaster for them both.

"It isn't always about looks, John." Alex hissed out. "Keep your voice down, Jesus."
And he sneers at Alex, "Why?"

"Seriously! You're throwing school yard insults out about her? She's an amazing person. One of
the kindest you'll ever meet." Alex shot back. John's eyes narrowed and he shoved his hands into
his pockets all while staring Alex down."- And the most trusting."

Their eyes met at that very moment.

Alex watched John's eyes widened slightly and then John's face crumpled.

"What's that even supposed to mean?" John asked, his tone almost sounded threatening Alex
thought. Even over the tune of 'Baby its cold outside' playing at its loudest.

Alex shrugged and he puts his own hands into his pocket. Their eyes were having a silent battle
and in seconds John is barging past his boyfriend leaving Alex stood there with anger bubbling up
inside him.

He didn't stop John, he let him run off into the crowd. Alex watched though, he sees John go right
up to Jefferson, once again. Alex swallowed thickly, ridding that lump in his throat, that horrible
ball of hurt that ached. Seeing John do that to him.

Knowing it hurt him.

John knew him and Eliza weren't a thing anymore, so why did he have to do such a thing Alex
wondered. John always had to go that extra mile to cause chaos or drama. Always wanting a rise
out of him.

Alex shook his head to himself, he needed another drink he figured. He sighs to himself and goes in
the other direction. From here on, John could do what he wanted. Alex was finally taking himself
out of the narrative.
For the rest of the night Alex was stuck around with his good old friends Lafayette, Hercules, Sally and Peggy. Alex had missed them, absolutely tons. Eliza had to head off home early since she had her shift in the morning. Alex didn't want her to go deep down but it was best he let go of any hope or feelings he had now that he'd seen her.

Since his departure to South Carolina, it had been ages since they had caught up. Even longer since Alex had seen Peggy since she was often working abroad as an English teacher. She recently had just come back from South Korea. Sally worked for Alex’s author house and the guys, Alex tried to do his best to keep in touch with them but they worked a lot of hours, so it wasn't easy.

But it was nice to all be back together for Christmas. Angelica was over in the corner side-eyeing Alex, she cast him a smile or two as she was talking to her other half, John Church. Alex could remember back when Angelica had a thing for him. How he had to let her down, nicely, solely because he was more into Eliza.

Alex knew Angelica would never admit it hurt her deeper than she led on. She always put on a front, kept a tough face and laughed, joked with Alex. It had been years since those days but Alex often wondered. Still, Alex was glad, happy for Angelica. She deserved to be happy and Eliza. Alex longed for her to find a decent man who could love her, give her everything she needed, wanted, until her very last waking day.

Then Alex thought about his happiness.
Happiness.

That was something Alex had been asking himself for the last forty-eight hours. Was he happy?

For the remains of the night, Alex had watched John over the way dance with Jefferson. Some of it was flirty, some of it was just casual dancing together, laughing, snorting and joking around with each other. Madison had been speaking to John too. John looked much more happier than how Alex felt deep down.

Lafayette had noticed first, he whispered into Alex's ear how they were practically grinding on each other. Alex waved him off and told Lafayette that they were just messing around. False laughter but Alex knew Lafayette could see through him. Peggy saw it, Hercules did but they chose to just leave it. Peggy gave Alex a sad smile and bought him another drink.

Even after an hour later, John was still with Jefferson. No longer dancing, John stood against the wall and Jefferson was talking to him, closely. Their smiles said it all. Alex felt sick to his stomach and he's in a daze watching them.

All of a sudden Alex felt a might thump.

"Alex!" Peggy cried and Alex is jilted by her hand launching itself into his shoulder.
Alex grunted and he's looking back at. He almost spilled his beer everywhere. "Huh?"

"You keep spacing out!" Peggy whined, Alex looks at her and he's looking around at them all. He hadn't realised he was even doing that. Alex fluttered his eyes at them all and he's chuckling like it's nothing.

"Really?" He says, a tad embarrassed by it.

Hercules gave a swift, "Yeah, bro! You ite'?"

Lafayette was tilting his head at him, eyes narrowing with a pout on his mouth before saying, "Mon Ami, what is wrong?" Then he takes another puff of his sparkly purple vape and he's blowing out strawberry smoke. Sally coughed from it, wafting her hand and frowning at Lafayette as he does.

"Nothing, honest! I'm cool" Alex lied, his mind was scattered really. What with John and Jefferson, before them, it had been since the other night with John and his sketchbook. Nothing had been right since then.

Alex was itching inside to find out more about the last page of this Francis guy and the mysterious girl that were hanging on a rope together. It meant something.

Lafayette ushered Alex his way, "Come, I have someone I would like you to meet" he tells John. "You'll like this"

With a shrug, Alex figured it might cheer him up for once tonight.

And it did because Lafayette introduces Alex to a publisher, this swanky man who worked for one of the top companies, in cahoots with one of the heads from a top magazine. Alex was over the fucking moon. He clinked Lafayette's drink in glee over this and from then on, Alex got chatting to this guy for over half an hour.

Things were fine until -
"Wha! -" Alex whelped.

Both Lafayette's eyes and the publisher's eyes were almost falling out. Alex was instantly dragged from them by John, he winced as lithe fingers gritted into his forearm and John swivelled Alex around like a toy.

John who had the most cunning grin on his face, Alex could smell the beer on him and wondered just how much John had to drink tonight. Alex hadn't seen John for ages since he stormed off earlier.

Alex glowered at John. Because how dare he.

Lafayette pardons what is happening to the man they were talking to and tries to keep him talking for Alex's sake.

"Alex" John purred. "Alex, Lex, baby girl, there you are!"

Alex's big brown eyes went even bigger at the pet name, John never called him that or he had before, but only as a joke between them. It was ridiculous and Alex didn't appreciate it either. He could hear Peggy wheeze with laughter from behind him at the bar and Hercules next to her making a crude low whistle at them both.
How embarrassing.

At this Lafayette frowns at John's behaviour and he goes back to talking to the publisher, hoping he doesn't lose interest since Alex is occupied by John.

"John, the fuck are you doing?" Alex muttered under his breath at John. "I was talking to a potential client!"

Alex looked over his shoulder at the man stood by Lafayette. He offered him an apologetic smile while John manhandled him and chewed at his neck. Pawing at him like a baby animal, hands all over him, John sneering drunken giggles as he did.

Alex let out a low moan at the soft kisses on his neck but he didn't allow himself to get swept away that easily. Alex felt his blood pressure go up a notch and with John acting the way he was, Alex really felt like screaming the odds at him.

"Ah, fuck work. You're always working, work, work, work." John mutters to Alex, then John awfully started singing out Rihanna's 'Work' loudly at the top of his voice. Oh, it drew so much unwanted attention. Alex wanted to die, he mutters for John to stop when looking back daringly at Lafayette who was trying not to laugh. He's trying to keep the publisher talking but second by second, it was evident the man was losing interest with Alex away.

Peggy fist pumps shouting, "Sing it baby!" she's full of drink herself and Hercule lets out a whistle. Some other people did too.

Despite being a loud person himself, this was too much. Alex felt the blood rush to his face. He was bright red from all of this. It was so embarrassing. He could kill John for this.

Then John worms his arms around Alex's waist, pulls Alex right in so that their chests brushed. Alex tries to push out of his hold but John only tightened it. Alex hated when John was like this. He had been doing it all night whenever they were around people. John latching on to him so possessively. It was crazy.

John was like an itch he just couldn't scratch the hell away.
And Alex wondered how he could go from being in love with somebody, to fully wishing he could just run away from them.

Then John booms out with, "We're here to chill, am I right?!" John shouts over a scowling Alex, to make sure they could all hear them. Peggy, Sally now joining them back at the bar with her man and Hercules all cheered.

The guy Alex had been talking to stood there with his drink, he was staring at his phone, Lafayette tries to keep their conversation flowing. He's looking back at Alex needly, clearly wanting Alex to come back over. But it wasn't happening. John made sure of that.

As Alex struggled, John forced himself on Alex, kissing him. Alex kissed him back at first before pulling away. He thought just one kiss would make John satisfied but it didn't. He needed another and another. Alex could hear his friends apart from Lafayette cheer.

"John -" Alex said between kisses. He finally breaks free, catching his breath as he did. "Stop, fuck. Stop."

John is staring at Alex all dreamily, half-drunk and he's got this mischievousness about him. It doesn't sit well with Alex at all.

"Yo" John says over to Peggy, Hercules, Sally and her boyfriend at the bar. Even a few other people sat there and the bartender glance over at them. Alex had never felt so humiliated. Lafayette sighs as the publisher walks away, now fully uninterested and he's half way across the room. He did try for Alex's sake though.

Lafayette goes to lean against the bar table next to Hercules. He's taking a sip of his cocktail, glaring at John as he did. Alex does see it, great, now he knew Lafayette didn't like John. Well, it came as no surprise.

His boyfriend seemed to like rubbing people up the wrong way. Lafayette studied John as he took another sip, staring and glaring. It was rare for Lafayette to ever dislike anyone enough to be like this. Lafayette always got along with everyone.

Except John.

"Yo, y'all, you do know this is the man I'm marrying, someday" John tells them all. "Alexander Hamilton is mine"

Alex shuddered at John's words. He's branding him in public, suddenly Alex feels more like an object than a human. Like a pet - it's horrible.

Peggy let out a soft coo and so did Hercules. Lafayette didn't look one bit unfazed, he continued to drink away. Sally swats her boyfriend's leg and asks if he was going to purpose someday.

Alex felt himself froze at that comment.

"Really?!!" Peggy asks, excitedly.

He didn't see them lasting that long.

John nodded at them all, "Damn right, I'm marrying him."
Alex wanted to give a curt 'yeah right' at that one.

"Can I come to the wedding?!"

Alex had to tune all this bullshit out. He starts to pull at John's arms to let him go again. Lafayette watches as he does.

" - You're all coming!" John yells with open arms. "Hey, you, Laf-a- fuckin' - whatever it is -" John says, carelessly, pointing at Lafayette. Hercules howled in laughter with Peggy. Lafayette shook his head at John, scowling at him. "Don't you bring any of those snails or frog legs to my wedding! Fuck, no. You immigrants eat weird shit. Uh, wait -"

Alex's mouth dropped and so did Lafayette's.
Alex was an immigrant. John knew that.

John hiccuped as he spoke, Alex mutters for John to let him go and John is swaying on his feet. "You can speak French though. Baby girl here speaks French to me all the time! Don't you, Alex? He does! He whispers it into my ear, purrs like a fucking kitten. Especially when I fuck him!"

Oh god.
No, no. Alex could feel himself shake.

Hercules let out a loud hoot and he's banging his hand down while Peggy did the same. Sally let out a cheer with her boyfriend. Lafayette's grip on his glass tightened more and more. His nostrils flare at John's gloating and the way his friend, Alex looked, in dread, only riled Lafayette up even more.
"Sometimes he calls me 'Papi' can you believe it? - Hell and I'm the younger one!" John roared.

Hercules almost fell off his fucking chair and he shouts 'Nah, dude, you're bad!' and Peggy is spitting out her drink, it goes down her red cami vest and between the crack of her cleavage.
This wasn't happening, Alex kept telling himself and he mutters, brokenly, "John, John stop -" but he went ignored.

John tightened his hands on Alex's waist, bared his nails into Alex's love handles, it hurt.

Alex winces under his breath and John sneered another laugh, "He does! He's a wild one! Loves to pull my hair too - but he's always, always the screamer -"
Alex was shaking.

"He loves it when I do this, y'know -" John grips tightly at Alex's love handles, squeezing them and Alex gasps. Sally shouted 'More to love is always a good thing!' and Peggy is going 'Aw' at Alex's chub. Alex's entire face is bright red. He's a furnace. Hercules snorts and gives Alex a thumbs up before taking a mouthful of his beer. " - When he's on top, don't you, baby girl?"

John looks back at Alex, not lovingly, more mockingly. His smile filled with spite.
"My little pillow prince, ain't that some shit -"

How Alex didn't cry or pass out was a miracle.

He couldn't move, he didn't have the words to even speak. Alex wanted to just fade away, this was so humiliating.

John pressed a kiss to Alex’s forehead and laughed, he shouts over at them all, "Loves it he does, loves to ride me ."
Everyone's faces were in shock at all the crude, lewd information John was spilling. Alex could feel his insides squirm, it was just awful. Lafayette was the first to step in, he puts his glass down and barges over to them both.

It didn't take much for Lafayette to pull Alex away from John. Lafayette sent John a withering look as he did, John glared back in return. Alex couldn't even speak. "Come, Mon Ami, lets get you another drink. Corona was it?"

Finally at the bar Alex could breathe. It takes him a moment or so, everyone has gone back to talking, the attention wasn't on him anymore. Thank goodness. Alex gave Lafayette a soft 'thank you' and squeezed his friend's arm.

After a few minutes John strolled back over after entertaining Hercules and Peggy. As Alex was talking to Lafayette, John pops up right behind Alex, his arms go to Alex's shoulders and this time Alex snaps.

He snaps, full on.
"Enough!" Alex growled. Lafayette smirks. John stared at them both, stunned.

John then holds his hands up defensively, he chuckled and moves in closer to Alex, "Babe, hey. I just wondered if you're okay."

"What the fuck John!" Alex snapped. "Go away! Go back to fucking Jefferson."

"I haven't done anything!" John cried.

Oh really now.

Lafayette rolls his eyes, he sets his drink down. Crossed his arms as he leans against the bar, "I think you need to give Alexander a little bit of time. Also, I think perhaps, you, yourself could do with a breather too. Maybe, outside?"

John scoffed at him, " Fucking why?" Then looks back at Alex. "You're embarrassed of me? Alex I was just."

"No" Alex shot. " You've made a mockery of me infront of a potential fucking client! My friends, you've embarrassed me, hounded me all night long and that shit with Jefferson - no. Go away John, now. Go. Just go."

John sighed.

"You're overreacting. I'm your boyfriend, I want to show people I love you." John retorts. Lafayette snorted at that, rudely and John snarled at him right back.

"That wasn't love" Lafayette commented.

John wafted a hand in Lafayette's direction, as if he didn't have time for him. "Alexander, I love you. I'm sorry if - I may have been over the top."

Alex slammed down his glass. It drew attention, the bartender frowned and told Alex not to break
his glasses. Hercules, Sally, Peggy all kept out of it this time. Hercules recommended they head outside for a smoke. So they left leaving the three of them alone.

Even though it was full and busy inside, it felt like it was only them alone in there. At this big, busy party.

As soon as they left, Alex all but raged. Lafayette stood by Alex's side for support.

"You tell my friends and the whole room about our sex life!" Alex barked. "- Then, you cost me money! Opportunity! You, know, how much work means to me and this is the sole reason why I'm here at this stupid fucking party!"

Lafayette puts a hand on Alex's shoulder. "Alexander -" Lafayette tried.

John doesn't listen to Alex, he kept his gaze on Lafayette's hand. Watches how he's comforting Alex, his Alex.

"Look at me!" Alex says, he steps forward to John which snaps him out of his trance. "Fucking hell! You're not even listening to me. Jesus!"

But this time it was John's turn to burst.

"Money, money, money. That's all it is with you. Told you, Alex, I've got it covered. I told you I'll look after you. Chill."

Lafayette shifted awkwardly between them.

Alex scoffed at him in disbelief. "Seriously? Holy shit Well, I apologise if I'm trying to better my livelihood John. Not everyone gets free handouts at birth! For fucks sake, why. Why are you doing this? Are you really out to ruin me tonight?"

John tilts his head higher as he's looking down on Alex, in a superior way. "You think you've had a hard life -" John snapped. "You know about my life -"

"Not now, John. Leave it." Alex sighs, he's becoming teary-eyed now.

John frowned in return and bit right back at Alex, "So what if your mother is dead and your dad left. It ain't my fault you're some bastard orphan, now, is it?" He slurred.

Lafayette's mouth dropped at that.

John knew how much it affected Alex being an orphan, not have been passed around homes like a pair of hand-me-downs as a kid. It hurt him and John had just tossed that right back in his face.

Alex stood there, he took it. But he's shaking almost with annoyance and anger. Every possible negative emotion.

He was about to loose it.

This had been the first time, ever, that Alex wanted to smack John. Right across the face.

"You're just moody. You've been like this all day." John tells him, softer this time.

"Because you keep pushing -"

Before anything else, Lafayette steps in and he's pulling Alex away from John. As John tries to
follow them, Lafayette spins on his heels, he tells John to give Alex space and some time.

So John stands there, watching them leave.

Lafayette and Alex head outside mostly because Lafayette needs a cigarette since his vape had ran out. But to also get Alex's headspace cleared, properly.

As they're in the elevator together, Lafayette says in French, to a teary-eyed Alex, "You're going to tell me the full story, about how you both met. I want to know everything, Mon Ami. Understood?"

After a brief moment and the doors opened, Lafayette asks once more, "Yes?"
And shakily, letting out a very much needed heavy exhale, Alex weakly says, "Yeah" before breaking down.

While Alex was outside, John moped at the bar by himself. All of Alex's friends had gone, all of them.

John downed the last of Alex's beer and sighed. He hated this, tonight had been shit. Every attempt he tried to make never seemed like the right one and he kept screwing up.

That's when John remembered earlier he had stolen Alex's phone from his pocket when he wasn't looking and hey were hugging. He wondered if he should just call an uber and head back to the apartment. Alex could meet him back there. Better yet - John thinks on booking a hotel. Alex probably wasn't going to get in bed with him when they got home later.
Oh, it was a mess.

Before John could really make a decision, his attention is swiftly taken away by the shadow that manifests over him there at the bar. He looks up glumly and he's met face to face with Jefferson, again, for the umpteenth time tonight. He's there with that curly hair of hair, stocky tall figure in his magenta shirt and black tie. Handsome as ever, smirking away at John.

"You're finally alone"

So, rather than sit here feeling miserable, John smirked right back. He tilts his head, gestures for Jefferson to sit next to him as he did.

"I am" John, sang, a short giggle thrown in there just to be cute.

Jefferson clicks his fingers at the bartender, he got a face full of attitude back just for doing that. John shuffled closer to Jefferson, he's nudging his knee against his. He rings in the orders, getting a drink for himself and John.

As they're taking away, Jefferson has already put a hand on John's thigh. Whispered sweet nothings into his ear and John laughed along at everything. Sighing sweetly, looking at Jefferson with stars in his eyes and when they're done with their drinks.

John tells him that he needs to use the bathroom, Jefferson says he does too. John can feel the light brush of Jefferson's hand on his ass, just a little pat, nothing more. John gets it.

He rolls his eyes to himself, Jefferson never saw though.

After dodging the swarms of people they make it out into the hall and up the next hall towards the bathrooms. Inside John finds that they're completely on their own too. Jefferson follows slowly behind him, like a lion upon its pray. John watches as Jefferson downs a mouthful of his wine and places the glass there by the sink. He grinned naughtily at John as he did. Now it was down to business.
Great.

"Damn, it's just us" Jefferson says, cheekily. "Mm mm, mmm, well how about that"
Yeah, great.

Eye roll.

John smiled up at him, bites his lip as he does, "Yeah, uh, colour me stoked"

Jefferson wasn't shy when he's worming his own arms around John, as he did, he's pressing his head down against John's. John looked a little on edge, his heart racing as this happened. This had only supposed to go so far - only enough to get to Alex. Which had worked but Jefferson seemed hellbent on getting into John's pants.

John knew this, he'd led him on. That had been the goal but this - this wasn't supposed to happen.

"How about a kiss, hm, Darlin'?" Jefferson asks, huskily.

They're walking backwards, John backed into the wall and Jefferson was over him. As Jefferson was trying to go in and kiss John, he was immediately dodged. John turns his head, he was too loyal to Alex. Alex was on his mind.

"Bit feisty, yeah? Love em' with a lil bit of bite. Don't worry, little bird. I don't bite, well, I can -" Jefferson chuckled, he ran a hand down John's face. He studied John as he did, taking him in. "But honestly, my god, you're gorgeous. How'd Hamilton end up with you?"

"His foster father knows my mother" John told him bluntly. Well, they did.
Jefferson nods, though he didn't look too interested in that. He goes in for another kiss and John turns his head the other way. At this Jefferson laughs but he shakes his head.

"Seriously, now. One kiss, sweetheart, just one peck? Hell -" Then Jefferson leans in, John squirms uncomfortably as he did. "You might just like it. If you did, we can get out this joint. I'll take you home with me. Give you the Christmas present of your life."

John sighs, he's getting tired of this now. So he's trying to move out of Jefferson's grasp, it didn't work and John's eyes widen. His stomach filled with dread and he's thrashing. Jefferson looked more confused if anything.

"Sugar, what's wrong? Daddy just wants to give you a kiss -"

John grimaced at that choice in pet name. As if he'd ever call anyone that. "I don't want to fucking kiss you, Jesus christ. Let go."

Then Jefferson shifts backwards off John, his expression changing, it's gone from passionate to completely puzzled, plus disappointed. He wasn't getting any tonight and John was making sure of it. No chance.

He belonged to Alex and Alex belonged to him.
"Huh? Wait, what? I thought you wanted -"

John laughs in his face, seeing Jefferson go from confused to full out annoyed made him laugh more. The entire mood was dead now. John was just glad. He needed to get out of here and find Alex.

"No" John tells him, he tries to be nice at least. "I just wanted some fun and I've had it. Let go now."

Jefferson wasn't one bit impressed. He growls in his throat and suddenly becomes aggressive. He shakes John and John flinches as he does. Then he's giving Jefferson one deathly stare.

"You're such a fucking tease!" Thomas growled. He's clutching the front of John's shirt and John scowled right back at him. He wasn't stepping down.

And with a burst of strength, John shoved him right off. Jefferson staggered back slightly. "I never said I wanted to fuck you, all I asked for was a dance. Jesus." He hissed. "Not sure how you can confuse the two, fuck off."

As John was about to walk off he gasped at the hand grabbing him.

Thomas pulled him back. Roughly pushing John up against the wall. John hit his head at the back of it, hurting him and he's whining at the pain. Jefferson, however, showed no remorse, no care, nothing like he was minutes ago. "Who you speaking to, like that? You little hick."

"Let, go." John warned him. His hazel eyes deadly. "Now"

"Or what?" Thomas sneered. "Hamilton gonna come to the rescue? He ain't here."

That stung because John knew it was true and Alex wasn't happy with him right now. John was shaking. But more so of the thought of losing Alex, that scared him to death and John knew he'd messed up big time tonight.

"Oh, gee. Look at what we got right here, give me that -" He's yanking John's arm. "All shredded up like motherfucking frankenstein! Holy shit. Aren't you something else..."

John's eyes twitched at that comment. He tried to remember Alex's comments, he said they were beautiful, that there wasn't anything wrong with his scars. But here was Jefferson, a stranger, a man who wanted to fuck his brains out moments before, stared at him like a piece of meat and now was making fun out of him.

John wasn't letting this go.

"Holy fuck" Thomas snorts. "There's tons of these motherfuckers, shit. You're into that sick shit, huh?"
"I'm not sick" John gritted out, not wanting to believe it.

Jefferson laughed in his face cruelly. "All patched up, just like raggedy-ann. No wonder Hamilton tossed you aside." Then something snapped inside of John. He could feel his inner madness rise slowly. "Both of you, useless."

But any trace of self worthlessness John had suddenly vanished when he immediately saw red. "You want to repeat that?"

"I think you heard pretty clear" Thomas cackled.

John was the next to laugh, Jefferson's own died down when he saw that look on John's face.

"Oh, really?"

Once Alex had calmed down, his friends all there outside to help, Alex felt the world had lifted off his shoulders. He was in good spirits after a chat with Lafayette about his relationship. He hadn't told Lafayette every single thing. Most of it though. Lafayette had tried his best to understand and agreed that they needed to have a proper conversation on a day when they weren't intoxicated.
When they all made their way back upstairs to the party, the music no longer playing, all smiles vanished when they saw the crowd of people all huddled up in the hall. Just by the bathroom and there was panic. Terror even.

"Someone call an ambulance! Now, right now!"

Everyone was freaking out. Two girls were crying and muttering past Alex sobbing 'I knew him! I knew him! Oh my god Tracey - No!'

So right away, Alex knows it's a guy.

Someone's been hurt, badly hurt.

Alex looked back at his friends, their faces are bleak and Peggy is about to take out her phone for footage. Lafayette swats her and tells her to put it away. Hercules's mouth is hanging open. Sally is huddled to her boyfriend, looking scared as ever.

But Alex began walking slowly, he's panicky looking around at everyone. People are rushing around and someone had just shouted for someone else to get the paramedics up the stairs. It was all happening so fast.

As one guy from the scene dives out of the crowd, he's rushing past Alex and Alex quickly latches on to him, "Excuse me, dude, uh what's happening?" He asks.

This guy gives Alex a torn look and says, "It's some guy, he's out cold on the floor in the bathroom. Jefferson or something he's called? - Look, sorry, I gotta go -" And he's running off down the hall,
Alex presumed he's trying to find the paramedics.

Jefferson.

It couldn't be.

No.
Alex felt all time, noise, everything just blur out for a moment or so. He's looking around, his fingers are tingling and his breaths have quickened. Alex can't feel his body. Everything was numb.

He looks to the corner where his friends were all gossiping. He then looks up infront of him at the crowd of people, some crying, some in panic and others were filming the event.

Then lastly, in the corner of Alex's eye he sees a figure. At first it looks ghostly, blurred. Then it comes closer and closer to him out of one of the other rooms.

It's by his side.
It's John.

John takes Alex softly by the arm, he gives Alex a little kiss on his cheek and whispers into his ear, "I think we need to go now"
Alex slowly turns to look at John, his eyes were glittering with tears and Alex hated how he'd managed to stop crying earlier. Now he wanted to do it all over again. But this was for a totally different reason.

They both knew why.

Alex nodded, he's expressionless, he quietly says, "Sure, yeah" and before they knew it. Alex is waving his friends a goodbye, Lafayette gives Alex a torn look. Sad for him and Alex hates how Lafayette looks at him that way. As if he feels sorry for him and he probably does. John is latched to Alex's side and they're going home while everyone else stays in panic mode.
They grab a taxi on the curb right away.

Once they're inside the apartment, John tosses the keys inside the bowl by the coat stand. He's studying Alex as he's slipping off his jacket and tossing it on the radiator by the door. It's already started to rain. He takes Alex's for him and does the same.

Alex is like a zombie.

He can't speak or do much, John is fawning over him. He's ushering Alex into the living room, sitting him down and tells him he's going to make them both some hot drinks, to warm and sober them up.

Alex tells John that's fine and sits in silence. Numbly staring at the black screen of his TV and into space. Alex felt nothing - nothing.

John does what he does, he comes trudging in with two mugs of coffee. Sits them down on the coffee table and sits next to Alex. It's quiet.
Too quiet.

They don't speak, though, John does try at first but he gets no replies. John gives Alex back his phone as well since he remembers. He sits back and drinks his coffee. Eventually Alex grabs his mug and downs the lot.

When they're done, Alex takes his and John's mug into the kitchen to wash up. Alex stares at the running water, it's whooshing out, boiling hot and Alex can't help but nothing, but, stare. John comes in, he turns the faucet off for Alex and this is where things take a turn. He's grabbing Alex by the arm, gently guiding him to near the counter top and pushes Alex up against it softly.
John wraps his arms around Alex, it's a proper hug this time. Nothing sexual, nothing perverted or jokey-giggly. It's genuine and John buried his face into Alex's shoulder.

"Alexander, you're my world." He whispered. "I love you, so much. Don't forget that."

Alex wasn't born yesterday.
"John, what've you done" Alex says.

John pulls from Alex so he could look in his eyes. "Hm? What?"

Alex found it in his to grow a frown, "What did you do"
John remained quiet. He dropped his eyes and bit his lip.

From here, Alex shoved John right away from him like a diseased dog.

"John, you better answer me." Alex says, firmly. Again nothing came, so this time, Alex tries with, "John, I gotta know. Where were you earlier tonight?"

John's brow knitted, he muttered back, "What do you mean? I was at the party"

Alex shook his head. "Baby, no. Fuck, just stop. Don't lie. Please!" Alex threw his hands up in the arm and clutched at the back of his hair, stressfully. He's so had it tonight. It's been the night from hell.
John looked mighty offended. But Alex didn't care. He was past giving a shit.

"I'm not! I was at the party!" John rasped. "You saw me there!"

"No, John. No, no. Stoppit!" Alex snapped, he points right in John's face. "Now, you stop that and give me the damn truth. Where were you tonight!"

And John's eyes widened, he looked somewhat defeated and yet offended how Alex had immediately accused him off the bat of this.

"You were with Jefferson a few times, I saw you. You were trying to piss me off!"

"Only because I was mad, Alex. I wanted to get back at you, guess, I was jealous over you, your friends and her."

"You mean Eliza? It wouldn't kill for you to use her damn name"

"Yes!" John boomed. "Your ex! Her, Eliza! Perfect-fucking-little-miss-Schuyler! Okay, fuck."

Alex let John off for that comment. "John, what did you do" Alex practically whispered. "It was you, wasn't it"
Silence.

"Answer me!"

John's lip trembled and he's shakily saying, "I did it for us"
Wait.

What.

Alex's ears went blank with what sounded like a flat line. Fuzziness conquered his mind and his stomach dropped.

"Why? Why the fuck -" Alex gasped, terrorised. "John, he could die! He's in A&E! As we fucking speak! Oh, fuck. Fuck!"

This was worse than Alex ever imagined.
This wasn't happening.

It wasn't.

But it was.
"Alexander, get a grip. He won't die." John scoffs, uncaringly. Alex's eye twitched at John. The fact that his own boyfriend could be like this, so, abnormal and deceitful. Alex had no idea how this is even real. He didn't want it to be.

"- And even if he does, what does it fucking matter? He's an asshole. I did it for you, you hated him anyway. Shouldn't you be at least a little bit happy? He won't get in the way of you anymore."

Bullshit.

Alex batted away his tears. "John, how - how could you even do something like that?!"

"Because" John let out, quietly, a tad scared as he did. Alex narrowed his eyes at John, he's petrified of what will happen next. Whether or not the police were going to show up at his apartment in the next hour or so. Alex had no idea. He couldn't even more, he stood there stiff as a statue. Unable to even breathe. "I just can"

It's the way he says it, unbothered, unnerved, blankly. Alex doesn't even know what he's up against and he's terrified.

"John, if he dies then it changes everything -" Alex babbled, he's shaking. Oh god. "No, oh god! Fucking, fuck!"

John comes towards him, slowly and he's got his arms out for Alex. "C'mere, hey."

"No, John, holy shit, stay the fuck away from me!" Alex screams. John has his arms open again, Alex slaps them away. "Fuck! What were you thinking! What the hell goes on there -" Alex gestured to his head tapping, his face in disbelief as he's yelling, "Up there, upstairs! What the hell were you thinking?!" Alex shouts at him.

John heaves a small huff under his breath and rolls his eyes. It's a game to him. Alex can't have John near him right now. "Do you have any idea how much this can fuck us both up!" Alex rasped. "This entire night has been hell! I can't even have one night, Jack. One motherfucking night to just be happy and have fun! You always have to do - something - to fuck it up!"

"Alexander, calm down. Just breathe, god. Listen, I'm not the monster you think I am -" John tries, shakily. Alex looked up at him with glassy eyes, betrayed held in them. "Thomas, we danced together, I was trying to make you jealous -"
"I did notice" Alex snapped.  

John moves towards Alex again and Alex moved back. He couldn't bare to be even near him.  

"Alex" John sighs. "Alex, look, please, listen. We went out back, he tried to fuck me. I said no, I didn't want him. We argued and that's it."  

Alex is gasping out, "So, you drugged him!"  

"I didn't drug him"  

"You did something!" Alex shouts. "What did you... how did you even get anything that would do something like that!"  

John drops his gaze, twists his mouth and scratches his nape, "When we were in the bathroom together, he left his drink near the window. After we argued, he got talking to someone else who came in, so, I grabbed the acid they use to clean the place. It was just there by the sink. I squirted it in when he wasn't looking." John then flickered his eyes, cold, red with puffiness from crying to Alex's.  

Alex gaped like a goldfish for a second or two.  

"John" He exasperated. "H-How -"  

"Alex" John pleads but it wasn't working. Alex didn't want to hear it.  

"You used fucking acid!" Alex cried. "Acid, fucking *acid*!"

Poor Thomas.
"I wasn't letting him bad mouth us, fuck him. He asked for it, he's been asking for his comeuppance for years by the sounds of things. Hm, Alexander? I think agree, deep down -"

"Oh, no, no no. Ha, no!" Alex stammered out, shaking his head and backing away from John. "Don't you dare try to pin this shit on me! Fuck off, John. No. Just no! What goes on between me and Jefferson, as much as I loathe the fucker! That's on us. That's between us, not you. You had no right -"

Since the death of his mother, this was the first time Alex had ever been this hysterical. He felt traumatised.

"Can't you just be grateful! I'm trying here, Alex. I'm trying to make this work!" John screamed back. "- I want to get us a place, I want to look after you, I want to give you nice things and a better life. I got rid of the one person you hate! Isn't that enough?" John rasped, brokenly.

Alex shakes his head, "This is not about you, stop playing the victim card! Stop! You always do this!" And Alex is turning around from John, grasping pieces of his head distressfully. Crying.

Alex tugs at his hair, he can't deal with this right now. John is trying to pry him from hurting himself and instead Alex slaps at Johns hands. "Get off! - Fuck and to think I told you we had to get you help, yet you do this! John this is beyond needing help! How can you even do something as sick as that! To try and murder -"

Suddenly Alex is spun right around and met face to face with a glowering John.

"I did not murder him!" John stammered.

Alex noticed, something unhinged in John just now.
"Fuck! I'm not like that! I just - don't say that, Alex!"

"But that's what you intended to do, right? To get rid of him? Jack, that's murder."

"He got in the way!" John hisses back.

"So when anyone gets 'in the way' you do shit like this!" Alex shouts back at him.

Then John goes stiff, very still.

"I did it for you, I love you, Alex." John mumbled. "I told you. I'll do anything for you."
Alex shook his head. John only did it for himself.

They were never going to be the same again after tonight or ever.
And Alex shakily whispered out, "If this is your idea of 'love' John. Then -" Alex breathed in, his breath hitching as he did and he quietly finishes with, "Then, I don't want it".

John froze at his words.

Alex is coldly turning away from John, he's walking off back into the living room and mutters "I'm going to bed"
John catches Alex off guard.

In seconds, John is pouncing on him from the back, sending Alex right over the sofa, Alex yelps aloud in shock and they're tumbling over the sofa, both of them land on the floor. Alex is whining in pain over his shoulder hitting the edge of the coffee table and John is the firs to spring up. John is yanking Alex by the hair and Alex cries in pain.

With a good shove Alex manages to push John off him and he's staggering up on his feet, with the help of the coffee table to push up on. Alex gets up and he's stumbling, still clutching his shoulder. But John has him right back, yanking on the back of Alex's shirt and with a burst of strength, he's got Alex slammed right down on the sofa. John clambered over him, steadying Alex in place.

"Don't you ever -" John hissed out between gritted teeth, he's bright pink in the face.

"Ever! Ever, say that!" John shouted. "Never ever say that!"

John then has Alex by the chin, clutching it, tightly.
Alex is shellshocked.

He's in a trace, he can't move. He doesn't know what will come next because right now, all Alex knows is that John is capable of anything.

"Don't you say that" John hisses out under his breath between heavy pants. Alex is wide-eyed at him, stiff, shaking. "You can't say that, you take it back. Take back what you just said, you didn't mean it."

John furrowed his brow between the tears that were now forming in his eyes. "Say it! Tell me you didn't mean it!"

"John -"

"Tell me you regret what you just said, Alexander. Now." John threatens. Alex can feel John's hand creep from his chin to his throat. Alex panics inside. "Say it, say it."

"I didn't -" Alex whispered out, he's scared out of his soul. " - I didn't mean it"

As Alex said it he felt angry with himself for submitting, letting John do this to him.
With a pang of anger, Alex sits upright and shoves John off him. "Get off me you crazy son of a bitch!"

John toppled backwards and Alex is running away or trying to. He's limping more or less. But John is always faster, he's quick, he's dragging Alex by the back of his hair and Alex gasps in pain.

"Get your ass back here!" John hisses.

Alex was thrown back down with a thump against the sofa.
"You're going nowhere!"

It was going to be a long night, indeed.

Chapter End Notes

RIGHT.

Y'ALL HAVE QUESTIONS AND I KNOW.
Dear god -

Right, before anything, NO. Alex is not going to be raped by John. Definite no. I've already got the first chunk of the next chapter wrote. No rape, yes there is abuse but I haven't wrote it in.

Also Alex is practically done with John by this point. He's just waiting for the moment to fling his ass back to South Carolina and he's running for his life.

I'm sorry for the violence but this isn't a happy story.

Is Jefferson dead? Wait and see.

Yes, Lafayette can't stand John.

John is unravelling his horrible self more and more.

Alex is terrified of him and doesn't know how to get rid of his crazy boyfriend.

Christmas ain't even here yet and they're already in trouble - god.

I hope you guys liked the chapter anyway regardless, also thank you so much for all the love and support! Means so much to meeeeee <33333333

PP XO
Alex awoke before John.

He couldn't sleep much, it hadn't been easy to and for the majority of the night, Alex had lay in bed. Staring blankly at the ceiling or with his head turned, gazing out the window, at milky twilight which slowly faded into the hue of pink and yellow candy floss, it was now dawn.
A new day.

Usually when Alex slept and awoke, it felt as if time had renewed itself. It was usually a fresh sheet of paper, a new page turned and he's just waiting to pick up that pen, so he can write on it. But Alex couldn't, not today.

It was Christmas Eve as well. Alex had only just remembered.

Christmas Eve usually would be the beginning of the festive magic, all the bubbling feeling of joy and happiness were there. Excitement for the big day and that Christmas feeling. The warmth that it brought even when outside was so cold and the lightness, glee that intertwined around your soul on the day.

But that feeling, that little speck of festiveness and the spark it brought, it wasn't there. Not today and Alex knew it wouldn't be there tomorrow either on Christmas day. No, instead it was pure misery.

Alex knew he probably looked like shit.

Whether it was from the endless amounts of crying from the early hours of this morning and last night, the bruise laid just around his right eye or the scratches on his upper body from trying to pry a raving, hysterical, John off of him in rage. Alex didn't know. He didn't really care anymore either.
Maybe he deserved this, Alex told himself, as he lay there.

He'd had a shitty life and still, now, it was shitty. Just when he thought things really were looking up, getting a new boyfriend, moving on, Alex had taken two steps forward and what felt like, four steps back on this torturous, mocking game of hop-scotch. He could never reach the end and escape, find joy in his life.

Alex wondered if someone had ever cursed him as a child when he had been born in the Caribbean, on the small island of St. Kitts, him and his mother.

Perhaps there had been a woman or man who possessed shamanistic powers, a good knowledge of and practicing obeah had done this to him.

Alex couldn't say.

With a soft mumble and a groan, Alex winces as he slowly sits up in bed. He feels like his body is about to shatter, the mattress felt awful too, Alex knew his bed was old but since John being with him, keeping him more active in the bedroom, the thing felt more horrific than before. Alex was tempted to fly tip it out of his window one of these days. Land it right on the sidewalk outside of his complex. Rid the stupid thing, rid the countless amounts of times Alex had let John fuck him on it. Since now thinking about it only made Alex's stomach churn.

As he's pulled himself up, Alex's mind was still foggy and he remained fragile, inside and out. A little lost, all over the place and traumatised that his boyfriend actually did this to him. Alex sits up, he leans against the headboard and closes his eyes for a moment, then opens them and flicks them to his other side.

There John was lay sleeping, on his back, snoring softly and taking up half the bed, as usual. His long curly hair sprawled out over the pillow and one of his hands perched just under his head. All comfortable, at peace and not even one bit fazed on how he treated Alex. Alex huffed at the sight of him. How lucky John was to be able to sleep that tonight and he was the one who had fucked up. Then there was Alex, innocent in all this and he's losing his mind.

None of this was his fault. Alex knew that. He couldn't blame himself over John's actions, it wasn't him.

No matter how hard Alex did try to convince himself of that, he still itched to a part of his inner self where he doubted himself and wondered if maybe it was his doing. Alex was aware how he had ignored John when they arrived at that party, made him feel left out and unwanted. He called that, Alex could happily say, he shouldn't have done that.

But the rest was all John.

Although, again, it wouldn't have happened if he hadn't ignored John.

Alex clenched his fists in tight balls and he wanted to scream into the night. He couldn't keep blaming himself.

He couldn't.

It had been a good hour or so of Alex sat there by himself while John slept. He didn't bother checking his phone, Alex needed to pee but didn't have the energy or drive to get up. All he wanted to do was sit there, motionlessly, left alone in his jumbled thoughts while watching the sky lighten
outside. With it being winter, it took longer and from the darkness broke out a dull tinge of dawn.

In that moment Alex remembered something. His childhood, in the old apartment he shared with his mother. Some mornings he couldn't sleep and would wake up early, when he was around six and Alex would run into his mother's room, it was the size of a shoe box practically. But he could go scuffle under her sheets, snuggle under with her and she would be half asleep, lifting her arm so Alex could wiggle next to her.

When Alex said he couldn't sleep, she would murmur stories or jokes and even the dream she had, she'd tell Alex about it before slowly slipping off to sleep. Alex usually would listen and watch the sky fall into the morning as he did. Just like he was doing now only except, Alex didn't want to huddle up next to John.

How times had changed.

Lost in his own thoughts, Alex barely paid much attention to the mattress shifting slightly and the soft rumpling of the duvet next to him. Alex buried his gaze on the sky still, his mind riding on his sea of memories and Alex was softly smiling to himself when he thought of them.

Then there was a soft murmur and moan along with a yawn. That was when Alex finally closed his eyes, slowly exhaling and all the lovely, happy, memories there he was reliving were switched off. Gone, like a remote directed at the television. Completely off.

Great, now John was awake.
Sighing softly, Alex braced himself and he's rubbing the corners of his eyes, removing any sleep in the way.

Since the night before Alex and John said nothing else after their bust up. John filled with drink and being the emotional basket case that he was, had attacked Alex and that had been it. John apologising after sucker punching Alex around the face when Alex ran his mouth, he took no heed of John's warnings when he pinned Alex down to the sofa.

That had been the result.

A swollen eye.

It hurt, a lot and Alex hoped to the gods it wasn't bruised up. The last thing he needed was questioning, luckily it was Christmas Eve and Alex had no plans to leave the apartment today. They didn't need to go anywhere, food was in, the gas bill was paid, everything was fine. Alex hadn't planned on going anywhere and he didn't want to now, even more so, not with a sore eye.

He hears shuffling beside him and Alex daren't look over at John. He could feel John shift on his side next to him and there was another soft yawn.

"Alex" John murmurs, sleepily.

Alex ignored him. He had nothing to say.

The only thing Alex did was hitch his bit of the duvet up higher over him and continued to look out at the morning skyline of the city. When he didn't reply, John came closer, Alex could feel John's legs hit him under the sheets, he was so toasty and warm up against him.

As nice as it felt, Alex hated it and it annoyed him more when John swept his foot over his, at the bottom of the bed. Alex shifted his foot away from John's and frowned to himself.

"Alex" John calls again, quietly and Alex can feel John push up just against him, properly now. "How long have you been awake?"

It baffled Alex as to how John could pretend everything was okay. How he could just revert back to his default self and how they were supposed to act like nothing happened the night before. Alex snickered sarcastically to himself, he shakes his head and scratches the back of his head. John amazed him.

"Alex?"

Snippily, Alex tells him, "Most of the night"

There was a small tint of silence between them, he could feel John's gaze there on him. After a couple of seconds, John wraps his arms around Alex's waist there at his side. He rests his chin on Alex's lap and buried his face.
Alex tenses from it.

He’s scared what John will do next. After the night before, Alex is convinced John could do anything to him. Alex could feel his insides tremble, his heart raced and to calm himself he bit the inside of his lip. He didn't know how to react back and Alex picked up on how it bothered John. The silence, the staring and the way John tapped his fingers on Alex's lap in thought.

It soon came to an end though, his trace broke and John softly asks, "Are you -" There was another small pause, Alex's stomach clenched from it. He didn't want to hear it because John knew exactly what he'd done. "Okay?" He finishes.

Alex answered him though, he wasn't not going to.

"I'm fine" Alex responded, quietly.

John's brow furrowed, he's nuzzling into Alex a little more and he swirls his finger along Alex's stomach this time. Alex waited for the next thing he was going to say and soon enough after more silence it came.

"I'm sorry for pushing you over the sofa, um, how's your shoulder?"

Oh, so he did remember everything.

Alex huffed to himself, smirking bitterly and he clenched up a first. Alex wanted to hit him for the very first time. He wanted to throw a good, solid, punch at John. For doing this, making his life harder than it needed to be. For playing him up, for hurting people, offending people, ruining what they had together. Everything had started off so good between them when they finally worked it out, made promises, spoke about their dreams and went on long walks back in Charleston.

Ever since Alex had invited John up here to New York, John had turned into a basket case. He was worse than ever. But then it made Alex wonder whether or not this was how John had always been. Perhaps Alex just had wool over his eyes back at the Laurens mansion and John played him.

Either way, his colours were revealed now. Alex could see through him.

"Fine" Alex said, simply, emotionlessly.
Alex felt John nod against him.

"How's your eye?"
"Fine" It still stung from John's punch and the scratches on his arms did too.

"You're mad at me" John whispered. "Aren't you?"

"I was" Alex says, roughly. "It's fine"
John sleepily rubbed his eyes, shaking his head. "You're lying" John sniffled. "God, shit. I hurt you. You saw that side of me, the one that I hate. I never wanted you to see it, Alex."

It was too late now.

"That side of you?" Alex questioned.
He turns to John properly this time. Swivelling around to face him and John lifts himself up from Alex's lap. He's leaning his bodyweight down on his arm as he holds himself up staring back at Alex. Dawn's milky moonlight projected into the room, the light shadowing over them both. Alex could see John plain as day in it, his figure in the light but his eyes were shadowed from his angle. It fitted the mood really.

Finally, the mask was coming off.
John shrugged, he toyed with a loose thread on the edge of his pillow and didn't say a word. Alex frowns, he pushed John again and says, "What did you mean? What side don't I know?"

When John didn't answer right away, Alex urged with, "John" And immediately he had John's attention again.

"You know what I mean" John muttered, he fingered the loose thread, wrapped it around his pinky tightly. "Last night, you saw how I was."

Alex snorts right at him, "When you were bang out of order trying to claw me to death and hit me?"

Then John sighs aloud, he stops messing with the loose thread and slaps down his hand in frustration on the pillow. "Alex! Don't, please. Do we have to bring all of that up?"

"Yes!" Alex snapped. "We do! Because I don't think I can proceed with this relationship if we don't talk about it!"

John nodded, he goes to take Alex's hand, Alex was about to remove it but John caught it quickly. He holds it there on Alex's lap. "You're right, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have just said that... sorry."

Coldly Alex sneers, "That the only thing you're sorry for?"

"Of course not!" John cried. Alex hushes him to keep it down since they might wake the whole complex. But John didn't care, he tightens his grip on Alex's hand. "No, no. You know this, I'm sorry. You know I'm sorry. Last night... I was out of control -"

Alex tried to rip his hand from John's grasp but it did no favours since John held on tighter.

"You were a fucking maniac"

John's face was a picture of shock, he looked so offended. "I'm not -" But Alex cut him off.

"You acted like a barbarian, a nut job!" Alex growled out. "A fucking psychopath!"

This did it for John. Suddenly Alex felt his hand grip with tightness and he winces. John cried out, "I'm not! Shit - no! Alexander, I'm sorry." Then John goes back to soothing his thumb around Alex's hand. Alex shook his head at John, outraged at his behaviour.

"No! You're not sorry" Alex told him. John's eyes widened. "You have no idea, none. No idea whatsoever over how you've fucking hurt me"

John shook his head, panicky and he's shaking. "No, I do. I do!"

"You don't! John, you can sleep at night. I can't!" Alex barked.

"I do get it!"

"You don't!" Alex repeated, wearily. "You don't!"

"I do!"

"So, tell me, Jack." Alex began, eyes bleak. "Is this the first time, you've done this?"
"Done, what?" John asked, his voice careful. Alex could feel John tense up behind him.

"Hurt someone" Alex struggled saying that, his voice sounded so foreign, so weak.

"Thomas, he's in critical condition. He might die." Alex grabs his phone from his nightstand. He's twiddling it between his fingers, his fingers shaking as he did and the breathing against his neck only made him more nervous. Alex's paranoid kicked in, John right next to him, watching his every move. Under his control.

"Do you even care?" Alex mutters.

Alex no longer even had a password on his phone, there wasn't any point since John was always on it. Always asking to borrow it for some reason or another. Then he gets up the text from Lafayette telling John how the police raided the place, they found the acid and couldn't find a finger mark on it.

But Alex knew the acid practically burnt through his organs, now Thomas was practically fighting for his life. However John had no answer to give and Alex sighed. That said everything, the silence.

"If he dies, John. We're fucked." Alex said to him sternly.

Of course, Alex hated Jefferson, sure, but he didn't wish this on him. Never. It was too drastic, insane.

"We won't and -" John whispered, he's searching in Alex's eyes and Alex did the same. He wanted to find the good in John and the hope that this would all be okay. But Alex couldn't find it. It simply didn't exist. Perhaps there had been no good all along. "He won't die." John curly finished.

Therefore, he got no sleep, not a single wink and John had slept peacefully beside him, no worries on his mind, budged right up to his side, clinging on to Alex. Leaving Alex feeling like a prisoner in his own bed, his own home. His eye throbbing from John's punch earlier, his body tingling with pain from John attacking him, scratching him up like a cat and his shoulder bruised from his fall.

Alex didn't know what to do, how to feel or what to even say. He didn't get on with Jefferson, at all. He had hated the guy but never in Alex's wildest dreams would he actually go out his way to kill the guy off.

"They found the bottle of acid, you used." Alex said sullenly.

Alex can't even believe he's saying those words.
Alex thought his whirlwind of hell that he'd been caught up in had ended from childhood. That all the pain, sadness, pure misery, nightmares, the miscarriage, all of it had finished. But no, here came a man, one that Alex fell in love with and now he's discovering this. Alex has finally unraveled John's true colours and they're not nice.

"Look, he won't die" John says.

Alex gave John a look.

"And how do you know that?"

It was already predictable that Jefferson was due to come out of this all badly. It was going to be hell if he lived and just as worse if he died.

"I just know, okay. He isn't going to die." John tells him, Alex could hear John's desperation, it strained in his voice and rattled Alex's heart strings. He couldn't let John get to him. No. "Please, believe me. I didn't put that much of the stuff in -"

Oh, seriously.

Alex had to laugh.

"Are you fucking serious?" Alex crooned. John gave him his best kicked puppy look but it didn't work this time with Alex. "That makes everything, what, okay? Huh? Fuck off. You knew what you were doing."
"Alex! Just believe me, I wasn't trying to kill him off. I wanted to -" John let out a frustrated groan, letting go of Alex's hand so he could tug at his hair. Alex scowled at the sight of John's frenzy. "I just wanted to teach him a fucking lesson! That's all! Get back at him!"

"Why?" Alex gritted. "Why the fuck? Go on tell me! You've hospitalised someone, Jack. You could've even killed someone as of yet. We still have no fucking idea how Jefferson is!"

"I know that, but, I had to!" John stammered out. "I had to! I couldn't let him, hurt me. Rape me!"

Alex's whole body froze over.
"What?" Alex squeaked.

John nods, he hiccupped a small sob and he's got a hand over his mouth. John was shaking. Alex watched him carefully. He removed the hand from over his mouth shakily and he's putting it over his other that was intertwined in Alex's hand.

"He did, Alex. He tried to, I fought him off and I couldn't let him get away with it." John sniffled. Alex felt his gut twist in knots at this fact. "I've never told you but it isn't the first time this has happened to me. When I was younger, I had this tutor and he did things to me."

Alex's eyes widened.

The nail dropped.

John placed a sweet kiss on the top of Alex's hand.

Alex cringed to himself at it, closing his eyes and biting his lip. Silently hating it.

"I covered my fingers, they won't track us down. I promise, Alex. They won't. Stop worrying." John said with a small sigh against him.

But Alex couldn't help but worry. There was no way he could put this one to bed. This changes everything.

"Who's Francis?"

John went stiff.

"What?" John asked back. "Who?"

Just great. Alex snorted with a small laugh. John was playing dumb.

"Don't act like you don't know who I'm talking about" Alex hisses. "Who is Francis Kinloch?"

John shifted ever so, he's shuffling away from Alex there on the bed. John throws off the bed
sheets in a fit of rage, he's still half-asleep though and staggered off the bed.

"I can't do this" John muttered to himself.

Alex heard though.

"Hit a nerve, hm?" Alex sang, mockingly.

John snapp ed his head around to glare at Alex before storming out the room. Alex is getting up too, they weren't sleeping it seemed. So they may as well get it over with. Done and out in the open.

"Leave it Alex"

He wanted to know everything.

As Alex left his bedroom, he follows after John. Strolling along, cutting his eyes at the back of John's head and watches his boyfriend make a move towards the bathroom.

"So you do know who I'm talking about" Alex said all mightily.

John looked back at him, half crying, rubbing his eyes and angrily crumpling his face up at Alex. As Alex follows John, he hurried up his pace when he sees John bolt into the bathroom, the door swinging shut and Alex was quick.

"Oh hell no!" Alex boomed. John was frantically scrambling for the door handle quickly. Alex narrowed his eyes at John trying to close it in on him. "Hell fucking no! Laurens you are not doing that!"

He then grabbed the handle before John could shut it in his face.

"Don't you even fucking dream of it!" Alex shouted.

Alex knows exactly what John is intending to do and Alex isn't about phoning an ambulance on Christmas eve to pick John up either. They weren't spending Christmas in hospital, John on an IV with his arms in stitches and Alex's Christmas ruined, sat, miserably at his bed side. Well, Christmass was already ruined technically.

Although John was that bit strong, Alex overpowered him this time by ramming his entire body strength into the shove and with John being sleepy still, Alex was able to barge the door right open.

John staggered back as it did, the door whacking itself into the bath at the edge and John finds himself tumbling into the sink nearly. Alex charges right into the bathroom, he's got John by the arm and he's gritting his nails into John's arm, tearing at bare skin. John whined and he's sobbing buckets of tears by this point. Alex pulls John out, along with himself and they're heading into the living room.

"You are not slicing yourself up in this bitch!" Alex growls. John's a mess on legs, crying and trying to rub the tears away. "Don't even think about it! You do not deserve to be upset. At all! I'm the one who should be! Stop trying to make this about you -"

Then John bawls out with, "I'm not! Alexander, let go -" John wept. "You're hurting me!"

"Good!" Alex only gritted his fingers into John more and then Alex had no idea what came over him. "Because you don't know how much you've hurt me!"

John tried to get Alex's hand off him but Alex didn't let go, he was holding John enough for his
grip to bruise.

"Let go!" John hissed.

"No!" Alex snapped back. "You're going to tell me, every, single thing. You and this fucking Francis, jackass. Everything, John, I want to know all this shit with your private school, that kid from the book store, everything! You hear me!"

John looked terrified.

"There isn't anything to tell!" John shouted. "Get off me! I wasn't going to do anything! Jesus, let go!"

Alex dove for John's sketch book that was hidden down the side of the sofa cushion. John is diving for it before Alex can get to it. Alex pushed him out the way and he's grabbing the sketch book.

"How do you - Wait! You've been in my things?!" John exclaimed. "How did you even know?!!"

"Oh, fuck off. You go in mine all the time, you know everything about me, John. Funny how I know so little about you! You and your mental issues. You and your secrets. I know nothing about you! Fuck all!" Alex shouted.

John tried to get it off him, Alex snatches it up and he's running around the side of the sofa, flickering pages until he found it. John chased him as he did.

"Give me it back! Now! Fucking now!" John shouts.

Alex paid him no mind. He's getting up the pages with Francis, the filthy, dirty pages of John on top of this older man. John looked at them as Alex shown him them, he looked scared, hurt and betrayed that Alex knew about this.

John's bottom lip wobbled, he looked guilty, his eyes were filling slowly with more tears and this time Alex wasn't move by them.

"What the fuck is this?" Alex hissed out. "Who the hell was this guy?"

"What do you want to know?" John asks him, he reaches a hand on Alex's upper arm and squeezes softly. Alex sighed, he didn't know what to do anymore with John.

He felt like they weren't getting anywhere and anything John may tell him could be lies.

More bullshit.

"Alex, ask me, I'll tell you. Anything."

Alex glared at him, almost hatefully. John's eyes squinted at Alex's coldness, ever so and he looked hurt. So broken and timid even. But Alex knew, that was just a mask. John wasn't as delicate as he made out. Now that Alex knew what John was capable of and the crazy lengths he would go to.

"Anything" John says desperately, his voice cracking as he did. Alex felt his heart tug a little but he's trying to stay mad, he didn't want to give in.

Rather than reach out to John with open arms, Alex found his voice again and asks, slowly, "Who is Francis?"
Alex felt the fingers around his arm loosen and then they were gone altogether. He had hit a nerve.

"Tell me" Alex moved his gaze back to meet John's. Coldly and John looked like a doe in the headlights. "Was he a teacher? A family friend? An uncle? - a brother?" It was ridiculous to ask but Alex did anyway.

John's brow knit, tears spilt over down his cheeks, quietly saying, "He was my tutor" But then snaps with, "You know I only have two younger brothers! Don't be stupid!"

"Then who the fuck was he?" Alex snapped right back. " - Because the last time I checked, John, seeing a kid with someone prior their age is known as grooming. Pedophilia. I mean, what in the - Jesus!"

And John shakes his head at Alex, he's rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand, frowning at him as he did.

"It wasn't like that" John sniffled. "If you would just listen to what I was trying to tell you -"

Alex snorts, mockingly. "Oh, I'm pretty sure it was. I've seen all the pretty pictures, this whole deluded fantasy. You and him, fucking each other on page after page. Yet, you take that fucking thing around with you! You drew me in that shit! - Me!" Alex exclaimed, stabbing at his chest with his finger as he did.

John sat there in the middle, still crying and shaking his head, as if Alex was lying to him and that he was the one wrong.

"Thanks to this shit being signed, dated. Now I know and you - John. You were a kid!" Alex hissed. "A teenage boy!"

This time it was John's time to shout back, He's on his knees and pounds a fist into the sofa, crying, " - And I loved him!"

Silence.

Alex could hear the pounding of his heart in his ears.

It felt like time had frozen for a moment.

John is sniffling, wheezing out small sobs in-between.

"I loved him, I loved that son of a bitch! You dont get it, it's easy for you! Alexander, to just point the finger at me! Unlike me, you've always had people who care about you, who love you, who've bothered to raise you. Me? I never had that!" John stammered. "Francis, he was more than just my tutor -"
Alex jaw dropped.

No way was John pinning this on him.
He was so done with the self victimisation.

Everything.

Alex was done with John.
He squints at John, hands tightening on the sketchbook. Anger rising within him.

"Your fucking lover?" Alex spat, his face looking grotesque.

A nod from John.

"Yes, Francis was my boyfriend" John murmured, even just hearing that creep's name sent Alex into rage.

No, just no.
Alex hated it and he despised the way John said it like this guy had been a saint to him. Alex could see it in John's eyes, there was still some form of sick, twisted, granule that remained there for Francis. John still probably loved him. Alex could tell, this Francis had no doubt filled John's head with delusion. False promise and John had been so naive, he would've believed anything.

"John" Alex said, he lifted a hand at John for him to stop. "Don't -"

However John didn't listen. His eyes were glistened with tears ready to fall, there was a story to tell behind those hazel eyes. Alex just wished John would tell him it. If he did, Alex could understand, somewhat better. It was the reason why John was screwed up. He just knew it.

But Alex didn't want John wittering on about how much he loved this man. This predator.

He couldn't let John do that to himself, remind himself of all that pain, fantasy madness.

"I loved him so much" John sniffled, his lips wavering and John leans against the back of the sofa. He wiped his eyes, hiccuped another sob as he did. Alex watched coldly. He wished he could go over to John, comfort him, he couldn't though.

"Francis, he was everything. Alex, he was everything and what he did to me. Not just me, it wasn't just me. He hurt us." John tells him, tearfully.

Alex frowned. He didn't follow.

" - And it wasn't just me he slept with at home"

Oh god, no.
Instantly Alex had an idea who the other person just may be.

This was vile.

Alex turned away from John, he muttered out 'Jesus Christ' to himself and made a low groan. He tossed John's sketchbook over on to the coffee table, so he could rummage his hands through his hair. This was becoming too much for Alex.
The entire thing was beyond anything he ever thought imaginable happening in that house. The Laurens family hired a predator to be their children's tutor. Alex could only guess who the other victim was.

This was so wrong.

"I don't want to hear the rest" Alex said over him, John scowled in return. " - You're messed up, I know. Jesus, don't I know. Fuck. I'm not stupid. I saw that last picture... of him. Someone else was there too. You wrote 'traitor' and they were hanging from a tree."

John looked like he'd been slapped.

His eyes wide at Alex, fury in them and John slams down his first on the back of the sofa there beside him. Hurtfully, he shouted, "I am not messed up!"

Alex winced at his wounded tone. Cursing himself in his mind how maybe he should've used a different choice of wording. But, fuck it. John deserved everything he got said to him right now. Alex knew he couldn't keep being sweet and nice to him.

"So why?" Alex spat.

The look he had on his face made Alex's heartbreak. While it all became too much for John.

He snapped.
"- Because, he betrayed me"

There was sudden silence in the room. The city's murmurs from outside was the only other thing that could be heard under John's frantic breathing. Alex remained staring at John, blankly, shocked. John heaved a shaky breath, he wipes his nose with the back of his hand and the other tear that fell.

"I'm not a monster" John said then sobbed.

He wiped yet another tear while Alex watched.

Alex just didn't know how to even help John. He didn't know how to deal with something like this. He had his own childhood issues let alone dealing with John's. Of course, Alex had known John was depressed since they had first got together. But this - this came down on Alex like a ton of bricks.

John shakes his head, as if he wanted to believe his own words and cut his eyes at Alex. "I'm not" He says, softer, weaker. "If I told you the story, the full story. Would you judge me?"
Sadly Alex had already judged John. The drawings, they were disgusting of course. But at the end of the day, Alex had to tell himself that it hadn't been John's fault. None of this essentially was John's fault.

"No" Alex practically whispered. Ashamed of himself for getting angry with John over this.

John's face was all blotched, damp wet on his flustered pink freckled cheeks. He looked so tired and lifeless. Alex hated John this way.

But really though, John wasn't to blame. Yet Alex couldn't look past the drawings, his boyfriend, pubescent looking on a fully grown man. Doing things, thing him and John does. Dirty things. Alex's stomach wrenched at the thought of poor John being taken advantage of.

Then one thing came to mind.

John's eyes were focused on the floor. He was still snorting and sniffling away tears. Alex chewed the inside of his mouth before asking, "Did your parents ever find out?"

When John didn't answer, Alex firmly repeated, "Did they?"

Finally John gives him a response, a small and uncertain nod. "For years, it was a secret." John's adams apple bobbed, he's jittering out a small breath and finds the courage to meet Alex's eyes. "They never took much notice"

Alex shakes his head, closes his eyes and he's walking away.

This family was a nightmare.

"Alexander -" John calls, he sounded scared. Terrified even. He couldn't leave John in this state.

Alex stops though, for John. There is more to it, he had to find out and they needed to deal with this. Alex is by the kitchen doorway, he turns back to John, leans against the door frame and puts his hands in the pockets of his joggers. He was waiting.

John was breaking down.

"I know, now, it was wrong. The age gap between us, it wasn't right. I know!" John rasped, crying. Alex sighs. "But it doesn't change the fact that I loved him and he hurt me. You've never had that happen to you, to trust someone, to give someone something precious and they throw it back in your face. They use you, leave you."

Alex's heart sank.

John threw a hand down the back of his mass of wild curls, scratching at his nape as he dried his eyes with his other hand. "This is what he's done to me, he's ruined me. He's turned me into this -" John's eyes bulged as he spoke. Alex watched him worriedly.

That was true.

Francis had damaged John. But that didn't change the fact that John had other problems, other secrets. Alex still wondered why John was kicked out of his school, the trouble with his friends and hate pages. There was so much more to this story of his.

There was something John wasn't telling him.

John was hurt, upset, Alex could clearly see that. Although this was still an act, he was trying to
deceive him, even now in his lowest moment. Sadly, this was partly the reason as to why Alex struggled to feel for John anymore.

Suddenly now John was the victim whilst being an actual, victim. Fascinating.

"So, you're telling me, this Francis, this fucking paedophile sabotaged your chances at school, making friends -"

Then John was seething.

"No!" He shouted at Alex. "No! He never did that! He helped me through it all!"

Alex arched a brow. "Why do you keep making excuses for him? Even now, if he hurt you so bad. Why?"

John narrowed his eyes at him.

"I bet you even still love him too -" Alex adds, it was cruel. Really, it was. But Alex needed to press his buttons if they were to get anywhere. "Don't you?"

Alex backed slightly into the kitchen, shifting on his feet, incase John decided to attack him again. At least he could close the door away from him until his storm of anger passed. John didn't lash out though.

He gasped, shocked by how Alex could ask such a thing.

"No" John croaked, saddened. "I don't! How could you even... Alex. Alexander, you're the one I love. Christ. I hate Francis!"

Oh Alex pushed on some more.

"Do you think about him when we fuck?" Alex asked, crudely. John bared his teeth at him.
A gasp.

His eyes at that moment were a dark, fathomless abyss. A sea of sadness - how dare Alex.
"No! I don't! Oh my god. Why would you even ask that?!" John snapped.

Alex shrugged.

"God Alex!" John cried. "How could you think that low of me?!"

Then suddenly John was yanking his hair.

Handfuls of it and distressfully pulling it, thrashing around there and screaming all sorts. Alex came back to his senses, he left his cold demeanour and ended up diving over to John.

"I don't want you to hate me!" John wept, he's tugging his hair manically. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry Alex! I'm sorry I hurt you, don't leave me! Don't!"

It was a string of cries for Alex not to leave. John ripping out curly strands of hair which littered all over Alex's rug. Alex shot over where he was grabbing John by the arms, restraining him as he did.

"Stop, John. Stoppit!" Alex tried to help John.

John shook his head, he was trying to grab at his hair again. "No! I'm no good! I'm worthless! Dirty!" He sobbed. Alex's face was a picture of concern. He had never seen John this bad before. Never. "Hurt me back! You can hit me if you want! Hurt me back, Alex!"

Alex stressfully grunts and he's engulfing John in a tight embrace. So tight that John couldn't move his arms to pull shreds of his hair out. John remained breaking down in his arms, both their hearts lay in pieces. It was such an awful moment. Alex felt tears prick at his own eyes, he rarely ever cried. Never.

The only time Alex ever cried was over the loss of his child or his mother. Those two horrific, dark pastimes that had made a stain on his life. But to see John, do this, mentally explode there before his eyes. He couldn't take it.
He still loved John.

He loved him.
Alex couldn't help it - but he did.

As John's cries shuddered them both, Alex buried his face in the crook of John's neck. He breathed him in, John's sweet, milky, lilac scent from his bath earlier. Alex closed his eyes and waited until John was calmer to speak.

"We can't keep going down this path, John." Alex muffled against him. He pressed up a light kiss there on John's neck. Mostly to show John he still adored him. That it would be okay. Alex knew deep down, they weren't. He didn't know how to handle this. But for now, a lie is all he could give John for some inner peace.

John wheezed out, "I know" He said. Alex huffs out of his nose, softly, tired of it all. "I know"

John sobbed, wiping his teary eyes. "I just want you to understand me -"

"And I'm trying to! But you've got no control over your actions, what you think, say and do. John it's like you're possessed sometimes. I mean, fuck, you attacked me! How do you think I feel?"

Alex hissed as he pulled back for a split second.

John looked back at him, stunned, hurt. Emotional all over the place. He didn't know what to even say to that.

Alex heaved another sigh, he then went to hold John again and tucked his chin over John's shoulder. John held Alex close. His arms locked around Alex's waist.

"I think we really need to sit down and talk about this. No arguments, no fighting, John. I mean it. You need to tell me the whole deal." Alex said, much softer this time. John hummed in return. "For us to make it, we gotta talk. Could you do that? Baby, talk to me about him? About you? I want to know about everything, Jack. Don't leave anything out either."

Then it was John who pulled back this time, he tilts his head at Alex. Glassy eyes, pruned lips from all the lip chewing out of anxiety. John's little uppity nose Alex loved so much, it was bright pink from all the crying. He was a beautiful mess, Alex decided.

"John?"

John chews his bottom lip and he is directly staring Alex, right in the eyes. Alex felt as if his soul was being scorched. John had this particular look.
"He's the reason my family fell apart" John tells Alex.

Alex frowns, in question.
John released another moan as he bobbed lightly there on his lover.

As the sensation sparked up his spine, pleasure, growing rapidly John could keep himself in one piece. Surely at seventeen and all of the years he had been doing this, together with his fellow boyfriend that he would be able to keep his wails hushed.

Especially under their circumstances. If anyone heard, one maid or servant, John knew there would be questions and questions always led to his father poking his big fat nose into everything. John couldn't have him finding out about this, not this. He would be finished.

"Francis" John hummed, softly and buried his face into Francis's wisps of thick brown hair.

John continued to ride him, hard and heavy. He could feel Francis's fingers digging into his ass cheeks, fingernails leaving dents into his skin and the burning sensation of his cock peeling away at his inner walls, John rolls his head back for a quick second as he bucked up and down. Bit his lip, both of them heavily breathing through their noses and John lets out a gasp when Francis's bucks up just as John was coming down.

"Ah! Shit, shit -" John rasped. He can feel the nails tighten on his skin, Francis was warning him. John tightened his arms locked around Francis's neck as he was truly now struggling to maintain his balance. God because every thrust was chilling, it felt amazing. Every time they did this. It was like magic.
It was wrong. So wrong, John knew it would be a problem if they were discovered. Francis was older, by ten years. John was aware of that.

He didn't care.

Fuck it all.

"Yes!" John rasped, as he came back down on Francis. "Mm, yeah. Fuck -"

"Love! Hush, hush. Sweetheart, you need to keep quiet."

John giggled as Francis put his finger on the center of his lips. John pouted playfully, naughtily nipped it as he did. Francis gasped and hitched his hips, right up, that thundering plunder of his cock went right through John. Almost impaling him. John choked out another moan, he sounded so needy, mewling like a cat in heat. That was when he got when he misbehaved.

John liked it.

"Ah, fuck - Mm - again?" John giggled, between rasping. "Again -"

So Francis did it again. He gritted his nails into John's asscheeks this time, oh the pain and pleasure combined, it was heaven. John needed to cum soon. As Francis did it once more, John looked into his eyes. He loved to fuck Francis and stare into them eyes, the intimacy - so beautiful when they did this.

Almost as if their hearts were entwining into one. Their souls married.

What John knew and saw when he looked at Francis was love, nothing but love. Someone who knew him inside and out. It wasn't like middle school with the bullies or his private school with his former backstabbing friends, the rest of them there at that school who judged him, belittled him or hated him. No, John and Francis went way back.

John met Francis when he had been twelve, he knew he liked boys, John had always known. It had been natural to John although it wasn't natural in the eyes of his parents. Although John wasn't natural at all from what his father would say about him. As if the trauma and trouble with little Mary hadn't been bad enough.

Even down to his birth, him just living and breathing, John had always been a problem. He caused problems, the way he was, him alone. He was a problem. A nightmare for his parents. But Francis didn't see that. John had told Francis his deepest and darkest secrets, his trouble, everything.
Francis accepted him and his many scars.

John had grown up drawing Francis, he knew how to draw the man with his eyes shut. John dreamt of Francis. John always told Francis once he was old enough, they were running away. Starting a life elsewhere, making a family together, living and loving each other. Francis was not a school boy crush, he was everything.

The air John breathed.

He was his life.
Francis pulls John's head down by the sides of it, pressing their lips into a passionate kiss as John continues to ride him thoroughly. In, out, in, out. Hard, rough, the wet slapping of fresh filling the room. Francis's cock raking the insides of John's body, mercilessly at top speed. John's rasping became heavier and heavier, he's pressing his lips back on to Francis's, his thighs are burning from kneeling so long over his boyfriend and his back was starting to ache, horribly.

But John would zone all of that, concentrate solely on the pulsing pleasure and ball of heat that was bubbling in his lower belly. Francis underneath him, thrusting away and when it all got too much for them, when the climaxes were just there, John practically muffling his screams into Francis's neck and Francis doing his best to hold it all in.

With one final thrust, it sent them both over. John was knocked out, his entire body gave up on him and he saw stars as he collapsed there on top of Francis.

Both of them panted away, hearts racing and their chests heaving heavily. John lay there resting on his boyfriend, he could feel the seeping semen dribble out of him and John didn't mind so much. But he knew he would have to grab one of the maids later and ask them to bring fresh sheets for his bed. For all they knew he jacked off too much, when in reality, he was being fucked more than too much, still John wasn't complaining.

John felt sweaty and hot now. Francis had his eyes closed, his glasses were just falling off his nose but John sweetly adjusted them for him. Francis smirked as he did and John grinned back at him, his dimples on view and adoration was in his eyes at he stared back at Francis. As they shared a small giggle between them, they basked in their orgasms and John lay against Francis's chest, listening to the beautiful melody of Francis's hellish heartbeat. John smiled to himself at it, he loved it, almost as if it were a lullaby. He could happily fall asleep to it.

But just like any other time they did this, made love, John knew Francis was never able to stay. After studying maybe they could have a good half an hour of good, hard, sex and Francis would hold John until he drifted off asleep for an hour. Then Francis would wake John up, get them both cleaned up and Francis would have to kiss, console a tearful John and bid him goodbye.

It was always the same.

John heaves a soft breath out of his nose, he looks up at Francis there while he rests against his chest. Francis moves a hand to play with John's curly scalp. Long, skilled fingers fondled with the many strands of them. John loved it with Francis did this, tousled his hair, it always made him so sleepy.

So John gave him a nudge in the side with his knee and John found the energy to say, "That was good" He said quietly. Francis could also chuckle, he nudges John right back and John did it back to him. Before long they were having a small war against each other with pokes, nudges and nipping.
John won when he hopped back over Francis, straddling him, their height difference meant nothing and with John's semi-hard cock lightly brushing against Francis's lower stomach, he was hardening once again. John bit his lip when he saw it happen but chose to ignore it. For a second, John wanted to be serious or so. He had something to say, something very important.

"You after more? Hm?" Francis asks, laughing a little and he reaches a hand to tuck a curl behind John's ear as John looked down at him. "Never satisfied, are you?"

With a roll of the eyes and a smile, John said, "Well, if the offer is there. I'll gladly take it -" 

Then Francis cut over him, saying, "Alright, give me a minute, sweetness. Need to catch my breath, fuck. God, alright, when you're ready, you just slip back in."

John nods but then he leaned down to capture Francis by the lips. The left Francis closing his eyes, John did the same and it was so supple, so loving. Beautiful, in a twisted way.

As John slowly breaks it, he's staring right into Francis's eyes and John goes to curl his arms around his boyfriend's neck. John sighs, he looked fairly pained and Francis frowned, concerned etched all over his face.

"What's the matter? Did I do something wrong?" Francis asked, his larger hands freely roaming along John's lean sides, up and down. John loved his touch, each way he moved those hands, it left a tingling, burning sensation. It jittered right up John's body, into his soul.

John shook his head, he bit his lip as he did and shakily, he says, "No, no."

"The sex bad?"

At this John scoffed at Francis, they both laughed and John goes, "Nah, hell no. Not that. It's just..."

"Do you still feel a little off?" Francis asks, his face worrisome. "You've been feeling a little unwell these past couple of days haven't you, oh, goodness. My sweet."

John had to smile at Francis's concern. He was always so sweet, so thoughtful over his well being. John shook his head though.

"No, it isn't that. I'm okay."

Francis tilts his head, he looked agitated and then pressed with, "Then what is it? Love, tell me. Please."

So after a couple of minutes in silence, them both getting their breath back. John meets Francis's eyes again and slowly asked, "Can't you stay?"

Now Francis only looked confused.
"Stay?"

John twists his mouth, displeased how Francis could look so bewildered by his question. He hoped that Francis had thought of staying too. John wanted him to. Not just for the night, as in to, always stay. Be here for him.

He needed Francis around.

Now more than ever.

"Yeah, why can't you ever stay. We do this, you leave, I wish you could stay the night."

It was Francis's time to sigh aloud now, he rakes a hand through his own wispy brown locks of hair and leans back against the headboard. "John, love. We've been through this. You are aware that I can't." John narrows his eyes at him.

"But why?"

Francis looked at John as if he were stupid for a moment, he's stressing out, "Because I have your sister to tutor next, as well as Henry later. Our sessions are timed, you know this."

John frowns at him, hurt pitched all over his face, John hated this. He didn't understand why Francis couldn't just stay with him for one night. That was all he asked. Although John didn't like
to admit it to himself, it raised suspicion within. He hoped Francis didn't have someone else who he wasn't telling him about. Another.

A girlfriend, a wife, a boyfriend or even a husband. Though this was Charleston, John doubted the last speculation be true. But even so, the thought of being played by the man he loved. John had no idea what he would do. Especially since they had made all these plans together and also because John had good news of his own he wanted to share with Francis.

Of course anyone would be delighted to find out they were inheriting their late uncle's family fortune. But the news John had was far better. Before anything, John had to really be sure Francis was in this for the long run. He needed to be. Francis needed to give him his one hundred percent before things changed, before he told his parents at eighteen he was leaving with Francis. Taking his big fat cheque off the solicitor and running away.

But the look of shock, confusion on Francis's face wasn't giving John any hope. He didn't like that face.

The uncertainty rubbed John up the wrong way.

Francis wasn't allowed to be uncertain in any way shape or form.

John pressed yet another kiss to Francis's lips, pulling away, he went back to smiling and Francis looked dazed.

"You could always sneak back up here, no one comes to my room after seven. You could leave out the back of the house, no one would see you. No one would hear." John cheekily giggled. He ground his hips a little as he did up against Francis's crotch, earning him a delightful heavy grunt. He was still hard, lovely. John always loved having that affect over Francis.

A brainy man, probably one of the clever, leading in the elite men John had ever known. This gorgeous, dreamboat of a man, who had taught him so much, yet John was able to make him as rabid as a wild animal. John loved having that power over him like that. That control, to make Francis weak. Break him at the seams.

But despite John's suggestions, Francis shook his head and he goes back to playing with John's hair. "It's a risk I cannot take. John, I can't."

John watches as Francis looked away from him, his eyes focused elsewhere over in his room. John's brow furrowed slightly, he takes Francis's chin, guides him back to look at him. Francis's brow rose in question.

"I'm not asking you" John said, sternly. "I'm telling you"

Francis looked taken aback at John's forwardness.

John pressed on though, tone firm. "Stay"

However Francis ended up in a fit of laughter, John rolls his eyes. Francis ruffled up John's curls. "Got your claws out, hm, kitten" Francis said, it was all in humour. John didn't find it funny though. Not one bit.

John bounces on Francis and whined, it was childish, he knew that and Francis was still chuckling like this was all a joke. "I wish you would just take me seriously!" John groaned.

"I am!"
"You're not!" John hissed back. Francis moved his hands to the sides of John's face. "I'm trying to talk to you and all you're doing is joking around. Don't do that to me!"

Francis's expression fell soft and so did his smile. "Love, I'm sorry. Aw, no. I am, I am taking you serious now. But I can't stay, you know this. I can't chance us."

John's eyes dropped, he stared at his hands and fumbled with them. Francis's fingers swirling around his cheeks made him look back up though.

"You want us to continue, this, don't you?" Francis asks John.

Only now did Francis look completely serious.

"Yeah" John replied sulkily. "I do, but, I wish for once you would just try and stay."

"John -" Francis starts, John is first to get his voice in there though. He shoots out with, "I'm almost eighteen, you said you were taking me away from this hell hole" John said, sounding quite pained. Francis twists his mouth, he nodded as he did, listening. Aware John was right, he had said that. "You say we're going to be together, live together, you said everything will be okay. Just us. Remember?"

Francis nodded. John looked desperate.

"Yet we haven't spent one night together, properly. Just as us, me and you. Not us, tutor and pupil hiding away." John told him sadly, his voice croaking as he did. Francis's eyes widened when he heard the way it broke. "You've been promising it me for years. And I'm so tired, so sick to death of hiding. Francis I don't want to hide anymore, please. Just stay."

And John goes forward, leans ever so, gently presses his head against Francis's and closes his eyes. He didn't want to cry, John held his tears back. He hated being sappy sometimes but when it came to Francis, he couldn't help it. His hormonal state was all over the place lately.

"Love" Francis sighs out. John released out a single tear, it dribbled from the corner of his eye, down his nose where it slithered to the corner of his mouth. John sniffled as it did and this alerted Francis.

Francis went to wipe it away, as he did, John ended up smiling at the gesture. Francis, always so caring. Out of everyone he had ever known in his life. Francis made it all better.

"If you can't stay then -" John's holding his gaze with him. Francis cocks his head as he does. Their lasting eye contact, powerful, loving yet very heart breaking on John's part.

He didn't want to ask Francis again why he couldn't stay. If Francis did tell him, John presumed it may be something he didn't want to hear. For now this would do. Just having Francis by his side, at least he had him or a swift moment. Until he would be gone again.

John had to accept it in someway, Francis wasn't really his. Not yet, not properly.

Until Francis took him away from here, John wasn't free. Francis was the only one who could set him free. Love him.

"John? Love?" Francis asks, quietly, worriedly.

Biting his bottom lip, John hated himself for letting it waver when he tried to talk. Eventually he
got the words out, in a small breath he said, "Just stay"

Francis gives John a warm smile. He ended up wrapping his long arms around John's frame after hearing that. John leaned into his boyfriend's embrace. Francis's warmth consumed him, his scent of cologne overpowered him, along with the smell of coffee, cigarettes, peppermints. John loved it and never wanted it to go.

They lay down together there on crumpled sheets. John doesn't know how long they've been like this. He isn't willing to get up and look over at his clock either. He can't be bothered and moving meant leaving Francis.

The clock in the hall outside his room ticked and ticked.

John kept his gaze fixated on the darkening sky outside his bedroom window. It was slowly going from a milky haze of blue to the inkiness of black. Winter though, everything was always much bleaker.

How John wished back for those summer evenings. Where the hot South Carolina sun was still shining by seven in the evening, him and Francis passionately going at it in bed. Beautiful beams of sunlight littering his Francis's silhouette in all its glory only for John's eyes. Them both finishing in a hot, heap of a mess and taking long, cold showers together only to fuck again once they'd done.

But summer was a long way off and so were they from really, ever, properly progressing in their relationship too.

More ticking.
John sighs under his breath, he makes a slow movement of shifting to look up at Francis.

Francis was lay there dozing peacefully. John didn't know if he was actually staying or not. He did have to go to his sister pretty soon though. Francis could always sneak back into his room later though and they could lock the door.

"Francis" John calls softly, they're both in this haze.

It's nice, warm snuggled up together, content, dreamy.

John never wants this moment to end. John takes the side of Francis's handsome face, soothes it with his thumb in little circles against his scuff. John looks deep into Francis's brown eyes, windows to the soul and John is in smitten all over again.

Just like he had been all those years ago.

Francis had been his first, first kiss, first to take his virginity and his first love. Francis got John to smile again, led him through the darkness and into the light from all the bad days. Cheered him up when his father got him down over something ridiculous. Held his hand during their walks in secret around the grounds outside, told John stories.

They usually kissed behind the trees, in the summer sneaked off and went swimming together at the local lake. No one had been around, it was just them. Francis had held John, took him right there and then against one of the rocky cliffs, water trickled down it from the upper stream and sweetly made love to him. John had saw stars and ended up falling in love all over again.

But could it last.
John didn't know.

He so wanted it to, especially since -
"I love you" John told him, breathless as he did.

Francis beamed at him, toothily and he makes a muffled 'aw' at John.

John's heart swelled when he was like this. All cute.

"And I love you" Francis said back. God, John could've sworn his heart had wings. He was soaring in spirit. Whenever Francis said those three words to him, it never failed to make John swoon.

It always made John's dimples come out to play.

"Where has this come from?" Francis asked.

John didn't give him a reply to that. Instead he shuffled over on his other side, Francis caught on and they were spooning up against each other. John with his back against Francis's cushy chest. Both of them sharing the single pillow between them. John could feel Francis's hot breath tickling the hairs on his nape.

"I just wanted to say it, that's all." John let him know, with a small shrug and he smiled to himself.

John wondered what Francis's face looked like right now.

"You're staying, right?" John asked once more.

With a pause of silence, John's stomach dipped and his face crumpled. He knew it. He just knew it. He wasn't going to stay. John was about to sit up and call it a day. Tell Francis to just go to his sister and get tutoring her instead. But Francis surprises him.

"Yes" Francis said. "I am"

Grinning, John reached over to grab Francis's arm and he dragged it over him so that Francis's hand was interwound with his own. Francis adjusted himself so he could get more comfortable, cradled John there at his front.

"Thank you" John murmured.

And he's got Francis's hand in his own, rested it just on top of his stomach.
John gently squeezed it and Francis did it back.

"Francis" John murmurs, he had to be brave.
"Yes, love?" Francis responded, his voice hazed with sleep.

"There is something I need to tell you"

John remained in Alex's arms in bed. After a cup of hot chocolate and a black coffee, they rested back up. It was Christmas Eve after all and Christmas was for being lazy, resting, loving each other. John had told Alex everything, well, Alex assumed everything but he had to cut John some slack. Perhaps it was the truth.

There were still so many questions Alex had. He needed to know, now, they had to just chill out.
Leave the subject for another day. John had apologised to Alex over his outburst from the night before and the party drama. John had hugged, kissed the life out of Alex and begged his forgiveness.

He had even gone out of his way to put lotion on Alex's scratches, bathe Alex's eye and kiss all the injuries. John told Alex cutely that he was going to make him all better. Also promised Alex he would get counselling after Christmas, he was going to do this. For him and Alex he had said. Alex hoped John was going to.

Alex had also gone on his Facebook and had spied over on Jefferson's page. He was so glad to see that Madison had put down that Jefferson was alive. He wasn't in good shape but was going to make it. He was going to live. Alex hadn't said anything to John about it yet.

He didn't want to bring the whole scenario up again until after Christmas. But Jefferson was going to live - he was just being hospitalised for a while. There was no description on what exactly Jefferson was having done to him there in theatre.

Alex was just so glad that the guy wasn't dead - he was a dick. But Alex didn't want him to die. God no. Though John had stated clear that Jefferson tried to force him into having sex. Alex wasn't sure who he believed.

Jefferson was some things - but a rapist? It all left Alex clueless. Unsure of it all.

Still, the last thing he needed was John in court.

Well, then again, the police were still investigating this and Alex worried that Jefferson may suspect John. There was that to come yet.

Alex tried to push it at the back of his mind. It was Christmas after all, they needed to stay positive, even after all the bullshit.

It was Christmas.
For now everything was peaceful, silent.

An hour had probably gone by with them like this, happy, calm and in bliss. Alex just hoped it would stay that way for the rest of Christmas.

The sun was just coming up, they had been up all night. Both of them exhausted, mentally, emotionally, physically. Ugh.

In bed Alex is soothing John's sore scalp, after all the pulling and shrieking, John had some a number on himself, caused a horrible headache. The crying hadn't helped at all either. But Alex was glad John was calmer now.

The city outside was still going - even on Christmas Eve.
Alex leant down to pop a small kiss on John's cheek as he lay against his chest. John played with Alex's chest hair, looped it, tugged it gently.

"Alex' John calls, quietly. Barely even a whisper actually.

And Alex hummed back and he could feel John's lips against his chest. After one kiss, John was pressing little kiss all over it and even boldly went to suck at one of Alex's nipples. Alex moaned softly at it.

He could feel John shift, he was sitting up properly now, the bed sheets swivelling around as he did. Alex's half-lidded eyes widened when he watched John move to clamber over him. John straddling him.

"John?" Alex asks, John had a lustful, loving look in those hazel glittering eyes. Still pink, puffy and riddled with sleep but somewhat energetic.

John goes straight for Alex's neck, he's kissing it, sucking it, sweetly. Alex had to beware of John when it came to anything to do with his neck. After the other day where he basically chewed him half to death.

"Mm, shit. John, baby, what're you -" Alex grunts.

One of John's hands go to Alex's boxers, he's raking it over Alex's cock, slowly it was turning into morning wood. John thrusts his hips a little against Alex's, their crotches meeting, bumping. Both of them letting out a brief moan or two.
"John?"

Then Alex follows John's league, he's so into it.
Fuck.

After everything this is the last thing Alex knew he should be doing with John. But he couldn't help himself - he couldn't say no.
John takes hold of Alex's cheek, guiding him into a kiss and their tongues clash as it happened. Alex's head is tipped against the top of the headboard, John grinding against him and the bed is shaking, creaking.

As John pulled away from the kiss, a string of salvia popping against them, John seductively moaned against Alex's mouth and they kiss again. Alex's hands take John's sides, he's running them up and down. He gets it - he knows where this is going.

John wanted to be wanted.

As John pulls from Alex again, the kiss making a wet, squelched pop that echoed the room, John tucked a curl behind his ear and whispered against Alex's mouth, "I want you to make love to me" John sweetly yet shakily pants as he did. 'I want you, Alex. Now, please. Alex.'

Alex was into this but he was tired. They could always do this later and as Alex was about to tell John, no, later, it never happened. John looked like butter wouldn't melt.

John moved a hand to the bruise by Alex's eye. He draped his thumb over it, lovingly rubbed it. John made a face at it. "Sorry" John mouthed at Alex. He had done that, caused that. Then he moved forward again so he could place a caring kiss over the bruise.

Alex appreciated it but it still didn't change anything.
Yet -

"I love you, Alexander Hamilton" John whispered.
Those eyes, helpless.

Beautifully broken.

From the scars on his arms and on his heart.
John needed him.

"Jack" Alex sighs.
Then just before Alex got stuck in, John whispers, "Give me a piece of you"

Alex couldn't help but smile.

Just maybe things could work out.
"My heart?" Alex asked, assuming that is what John meant.

"Mm, and that. Yes, your heart -" Another kiss.
John closes his eyes this time. "You can have mine." John rasped, as he went in to kiss Alex again before things got heavy.

"You'll always be a part of me... Alex."

Chapter End Notes

YEAH.
SO
MANY
QUESTIONS & LOOSE ENDS -
I AM SORRY.
This story will make sense soon and it will all come into a loop. I PROMISE.

John is a little shit. Alex needs to escape but maybe it's too late now... Also Francis is gross af. But what has Francis done guys? What has he done... uh oh.

Thank you so much for all the comments and kudos! It means a lot to me!

PLEASE LEAVE A COMMENT ON WHAT YOU THINK MAY BE HAPPENING OR WHAT HAS HAPPENED!

Y'ALL ARE GONNA BE SHOOK OVER THE WHOLE ENDING OF THIS STORY. *Manic laughter*

LOVE YA

PP XO

http://littlepinkphoenix.tumblr.com (HIT ME UP!)
Christmas day passed without any issue.

Any at all.

It was a calm, chilled day for them both. There were no arguments, no fights or drama. Infact, John seemed much happier. Brighter, a bit more cheerful and Alex managed to loosen up too. He still wasn't excusing John for his actions though. Alex had told John he wasn't letting it go and that John was seeing a counsellor once New Year was out the way. Without question.

John said it was fine and promised that he would go to his first session. With that, Alex said he was quite happy with that and they continued as normal.

They sprawled out on the bed together watching heaps of movies, the heat on full blast, Alex cooked dinner while John helped. They exchanged gifts, Alex gave John this gorgeous silver bracelet. It was stunning on John, the slim silver against his milky tan skin looked so pretty. John admired it all day long, holding up his arm and looking at it. A smile never leaving his face.

He was content.
Well, for now, it seemed.

John gave Alex this piece of art he had been working on in secret, which was Alex and the Washingtons. Such beautiful decorative flowers framed around them and in the background sketched behind.

It looked so life like, Alex adored it though and said he was hanging it up as soon as. Alex had given John a sweet kiss on the cheek and thanked him. But John had also given Alex something else, a gift that had Alex's gut sinking.

A ring.
Alex freaked out inside, his eyes were almost falling out his head when he opened the box. He didn't know what this was exactly and it left him speechless. John had shouted 'surprise' and giggled, hugging him. Then explained that this wasn't an engagement, not yet. Alex had been so relieved when John told him though, it was horrible, really, it was to think that.

How something good should be feared.

Still though, Alex didn't want to marry John.

He just didn't.

John wasn't the one in his heart.

Alex knew he wasn't, to the core, John wasn't the one.

Then when John tells Alex this was a promise ring, the hope of their love lasting and that they would have a brighter future, together. John then says it Alex how he's going to change, things would look up and settle once New Year was over.

As nice as it was to think like that, Alex knew better.

It probably wasn't going to change.

Not with John by his side.

This left Alex feeling lost, he didn't know just what to do.

Does he break up with John after the final month of being his caretaker is up, take the cash from his mother and scram. Break all contact with John and avoid him forever. Move, change his name, Alex didn't know. He knew even if he did, John would go to great lengths to find him. He knew too much about Alex now.

Also it didn't help his foster mother, Martha had asked John for his number so she could get a hold of him when needed. John happily handed it over to her. As if she were his mother in law to be.
No, Alex had to end this.

To keep John happy, Alex put his ring on and whispered a 'thank you' before capturing John's lips.
It was just finding the right time to end it and now wasn't it.

A couple of days later and it was New Years Eve.

Alex took John around New York one last time, fully. John laughed and said that Alex didn't need to show him every single inch of the city since he was returning soon. It was exhausting and they hopped a taxi home.

Well, Alex hoped it was the last time he was here with John.

But who knew, it could work. It might just.

He hoped.

Probably not.

Alex hated confusing himself.

They went for dinner at a lovely Italian place not far from Alex's complex. Alex was amazed by how much John ate that night, he never usually ate so much. Devoured the lot and even finished Alex's. Not that he minded. They had a few drinks, Alex one too many and John not a lot. A live band was playing there too and they stuck around for the music. The atmosphere was great, chilled and they were great.

John was calmer.

Alex noticed it, he wondered why. Now why all of a sudden everything was okay. John never trying to quarrel with him, no sly or snide remarks or even any rudeness to staff. It was as if someone had turned on the 'nice' button in John.
John was all cuddly, clingy but not possessively clingy like he usually could be. Clingy in the good sort of way, it was very sweet and cute. John was that extra bit lovable, too smiley. Alex wondered why though.

He was too happy.

Alex obviously wanted John to be happy, he wanted that, but this was odd. It worried Alex deep down whether this was just an act or not. He couldn't be sure but he was going to keep his eye on John.

This side of John, it didn't suit him.

Something wasn't right.

When their two weeks was fully up.

It was time to head back to South Carolina.

Alex didn't want to go back there.

Not to that dreary town and that horrible house. It was like getting caught up in a spider web, Alex was going to get tangled up, he just knew it. Something else was going to happen, in the pit of his gut. Dread was lurking in it.

John didn't really speak much of their return. He didn't look pleased but then again, there wasn't much emotion. John seemed hazed, on another planet most of the time. Alex had noticed the carefreeness of him, John not getting worked up or agitated. He thought John would've cracked up by now.

The night before they were due to head back Alex lay in bed, John beside him and Alex couldn't really sleep. His mind had too much going on in it for him to be able to sleep. He had to since tomorrow was going to be a long day, travelling and all.
"John?"
"I don't feel so good" John murmured.
"What's wrong?" Alex asked him.
"My body, it hurts."
"Did you eat something off? Pull a muscle?"
John shook his head. "No"
"You gotta use the bathroom?"
"No"
"You ready to go home?" Alex asks John, tone soft.
At that question John stayed quiet. He's staring into space, lifelessly and it worries Alex. He rubs a hand up and down John's arm, reassuringly and leans over to kiss John's forehead sweetly.
"It'll be alright" Alex tells him.
The covers rustle as John shifts and he's nuzzling into Alex's chest. Alex can feel John's soft breaths tickle his chest hair and in seconds John was fast asleep. In the darkness Alex continued to watch John, his face peaceful and even sleeping, John held such a stunning grace.
Still, Alex knew he couldn't be fooled by that innocent mask any longer.
When morning arrived Alex was up first and he was waking John.
John didn't want to get up but Alex forced him.
Grumpily John got up and he's getting out the bed. Alex is bringing in two cups of coffee, John snarls at his piping hot cup of not far short slapped it out of Alex's hand.
Alex's eyes sprung open because it almost went all over him.
He couldn't believe John sometimes.
Then after shouting at John to be careful, John apologised and lay back down in a sad heap on the bed. Said he didn't want anything, didn't feel like eating or drinking.
But Alex did manage to force a bagel and hot chocolate down him though. John never said no to sweets and he loved them more than ever recently.
They got ready, sorted themselves out and when it was time to go that afternoon. John was in a mood.
Alex tired to keep his shit together since he was stressing over the taxi being late and hoping they didn't miss their flight.
He wanted John on that plane and home.
"You got everything?" Alex asked for the umpteenth time.
John nods, he twists his mouth and dropped his gaze. Alex can tell John isn't too pleased about
going back to Charleston. John likes it here, he's far too comfortable and knowing he is going back, Alex was aware that John knew Alex could leave if he wanted to.

Leave John there and never come back.

"Mm" John mumbled, he sighs a she does.

Alex watches him stand there, drowning in his own sad thoughts before he decides it's time they left for the airport. Alex grabs his keys, picks up his duffle bag and switches off the light. John is the first out he door, waiting. He looked glum watching Alex lock the door behind them.

"Alright, everything is clean, off, nothing is lit. My pops will be back to check on the place anyway though, so it's cool. You got everything though?" Alex asks him, he checks himself over, patting his pockets making sure he has his phone and wallet.

John nodded and hummed again.

"John?" Alex asks, since he didn't quite hear him.

John rolls his eyes to himself. "Yes" He huffed.

Then Alex looks back over at his boyfriend. John was leaning against he hallway door, rucksack over his shoulder. Glaring elsewhere, away from Alex. He looked so annoyed, but there was nothing they could do. John had to go home.

"Baby" Alex sighed. "Hey, hey, look at me"

So John does, there was a tint of attitude when he did but Alex brushed it off. He goes over to John and pulls him into a hug. Alex runs his hands up and down the back of John's coat.

"I just... I don't want to leave" John murmured, sadly.

"Why?" Alex asks.

As John pulled from him slowly, he looked into Alex's eyes, John's were watery and uncertain. He looked scared and Alex had no idea why either. If anything, he should be the one terrified.

"Well..." John sniffled. "Going back, it means going back to everything, that house. The memories, all the horrible shit. Here, in New York, with you I feel like a new person. My life is here now."

Alex twitched at that last part. He was sure John noticed too.

No it wasn't.

It wasn't here in New York.

Alex was going to make sure of it too.

"You'll be fine once we're back there" Alex told him, he tried to sound assuring. But even he let himself down. John's eyes dropped and he's fumbling with his rucksack strap.

Alex scans John over once more and he asks, "Are you feeling okay?"

He remembered, John hadn't been feeling very well. He had even puked up his guts at four am that morning. Waking Alex up and since then, neither of them got much sleep.
John nods, he didn't look at Alex.

It was concerning though because it worried Alex how John was going to cope when he got back. The fear of returning to the point where John was being sick was so worrisome. There was nothing Alex could do, well he could let John stay with him here and they never return to that house again. But Alex needed rid of John, for his own sake. He had to break it off.

"Do we really have to go, Alex?" John is looking him dead in the eyes now. Alex sees how one of them squints ever so, John's lips were sucked in, he was biting on them, a wet patch ran just down his little nose.

He really wanted to stay.

But he just couldn't.

"We have to" Alex said to him. "Look, honey. You'll be back before you know it. For now though, we have to. Besides half my stuff is still in your house and you can't just up and leave -"

"Yes I can" John fired back, frowning. "I can and I want to!"

"John, no. Baby, you've got to think about it all." Alex sighed, he put a hand over his forehead. God here they go again, he then checked his watch. It was time to grab their cab otherwise they'd miss their flight.

"I already have!" John rasped. "I've thought about it for the past two weeks! It's all I've thought about, staying here, being with you, making it work and just - moving on!"

Alex shook his head, he's already grabbing his bag and tossing it up over his shoulder. He grabs John's wrist, pulling him along. "John we're going to miss out flight"

"Alex"

But Alex didn't listen to John's protests.

John gave up once they were in the elevator and out the complex. He followed Alex behind, sulkily. Their cab out there waiting on the curb, it was pissing it down with rain and John's mood worsened when his curls turned into a frizzy mess. Alex sat there cool as a cucumber with his hoody up.

Not once did John look back at Alex during their cab ride, Alex peaked looks at him and tried to make small talk but John ignored him. Until they paid the cab, grabbed their gear and headed into the airport. John seemed to have cheered up by then and Alex got them lunch just to win him over. It seemed to work after devouring a tray of McDonalds and John was full now, happier.

As they were waiting at their gate for the plane to pull in. John and Alex were side by side at each other. For what felt like forever John took Alex's hand.

Alex's eyes danced over to see and he watches how John's lithe fingers interwind with his own.

"You okay?" Alex asks him softly.

John is staring into the distance, his face colourless, eyes bleak and he gives a little smile. There is a nod.

"John?" Alex asks, he needed a proper response. "Talk to me"
Then John heaves a small breathe through his nose, he opens his mouth, says, "There is something I need to tell you"

It came out like a whisper, anxious if Alex were to push.

"Yeah?" Alex asks, his brow furrowed, he's listening. "What's up?"

John was about to speak but nothing came out.

He hesitates.
A spark of worry is lit inside of Alex.

"John?"

And he goes to speak again, a mumble came out and Alex didn't catch it. "Baby, I can't hear you. What's the matter? You feel sick again?"

"No" John says, sighing. "Not that, I'm not feeling sick. It's just... I have something I really need to tell you." He strained. John's voice broke in-between.

Alex stared deep into his eyes. He saw nothing but fear there.

John looked petrified.

So he raised his brow as a way to push John to keep the conversation flowing. John remained sheepish, he looked away again and he's biting his lip.

"Doesn't matter" He then mumbled.

Alex wanted refute back to that comment but just then the announcement called for their gate to be opened and that caught both their attention.

As they're standing up, Alex notices John appear winded. He's grunting and stretching out his back. Alex eyed him for a second before taking John's hand. He figures it may cheer him up. Alex walks along with John to their gate opening and wait in the small queue with the others.

For the entire duration John said nothing, he was staring into space again. Alex watches him in the corner of his eye, he wondered just what John was about to say to him. He figured John would just tell him in his own time.

On the plane John sat by the window with Alex next to him and another man on the end row.

The take off startled John, he didn't say a word but Alex knew.

He grabs John's hand, their fingers twirl around each others. Alex looks over to John and John could only give a small smile.

Sad but small. Meaningful, John looked like he was holding back a secret.

Alex never asked him though.

And John never says anything. Still John was grateful Alex was holding his hand, since it's good enough to keep his nerves at bay while they're taking off.

Alex rests his hand in John's lap. Still clutching on tightly. John brings their hands up to near his stomach and he leans his hand against Alex's shoulder. Closes his eyes.

Once they were up in the air, the seatbelt sign pinged off from above signalling everyone to unbuckle. John didn't move, he was already fast asleep and Alex soon followed suit.

Two hours passed and they were both back in South Carolina.

When they arrived back at the house, Alex dreaded the sight of it all. The same dark, ghostly mansion was there waiting for them. John appeared as weary as he did when they got out the cab. Alex paled at the sight of it. They paid the cab driver and Alex got the bags out of the trunk. John was heading to the front door and unlocking it.
Grabbing the bags, Alex trailed after John and up the stairs. John had the door already open and was inside. Alex gave a shaky sigh, closed his eyes before exhaling.

He hated this house.

Then reopened his eyes, braced himself and went inside.

It was still the same, time stood still inside the Laurens's home.

John took his bag from Alex and they both exchanged looks.

"Home sweet home" Alex said jokingly. While John gave him a small nudge and pouted. He looked so pissed off.

Of course, Alex knew John didn't want to be here, nor did he. But this was where Alex was leaving John and the next time he had this travel bag over his shoulder was when he was leaving out that front door for good.

Forever.
So the evening went on, after putting their bags upstairs, unpacking and chilling for half an hour. Alex told John they should probably grab a bite to eat and recommended they head into town for dinner since nothing was in. John gave Alex a withering look, told him he was too exhausted to go on a long walk into town and just wanted to rest in bed. Do nothing but just sleep.

It worried Alex though.

John didn't seem himself at all.

For the rest of the night they remained upstairs, in John's room. Alex lay by his side, promised John tomorrow they could go out for waffles and pancakes in town for breakfast. John had been bright-eyed at the idea and fell asleep instantly. He was so tired these days. Alex felt John's forehead for a fever and nothing, odd.

Just when Alex thought John was asleep and turned off the lamp on the nightstand.

He tucked back down into the covers and John sleepily murmured out, "Alex"

Alex settled down and he turns his head to face John.

There in the darkness Alex could make out John's outline, it was pitch black and the moon wasn't out tonight. Which added to the whole creep factor the house held. Even John's room, coming back, Alex sworn before when he was staying here, it had never been this dreary looking. Maybe it was being back, from a vibrant busy city to somewhere so lifeless, that made everything feel weird.

Both him and John felt it.

The heaviness that lingered in the house, suffocation, ghostly shadows, sadness and horror which only the walls of this house had witnessed.

Alex hoped his next few weeks in this place passed quickly.

"Yeah" Alex said back.

John shuffled around, he makes a soft grunt and sighs.

"Yeah?" Alex asked once more, louder. He wanted to get some sleep too and having a conversation at this house wasn't on his to do list.

Suddenly Alex feels on of John's hands creep on his waist and it's rubbing in little circles there on his lower back.
"Do you love me"

Wait
Where had that come from?

What?
Alex's brow raised at this.

This was weird, John wasn't acting like himself and now he was asking the oddest of questions.

Alex's silence must've struck a nerve inside John because when he didn't answer quick enough. The motion of circles stopped against his skin, John started to turn the other way with his back to Alex and he remained question.

Feeling bad, Alex moved in closer to John and he wraps an arm around him. Drags John into his body heat, his chest meeting John's back and he buried his nose into John's shoulder.

A couple of minutes passed by until John asked once more, sadder than the last time. "Do you?"
Sighing, Alex said, "John, you know I do"

Alex wished he didn't.
But he did love John, still, it was a dangerous form of love. It wasn't healthy and Alex couldn't give John wanted he wanted. He had to put himself first. Stick to the arrangement of looking after John, taking that cheque and go back to college. Move on.

"Okay" John whispered back. "I just... needed to hear that"

With that John felt quiet and Alex assumed he was asleep, the soft snores that soon came confirmed it. But Alex lay there awake, thinking, wondering, suspicious of John and his behaviour. It truly baffled him.

How one moment Alex could be terrified of John and the next he felt so weak, so endorsed in him. In love with John. It was fucking up his mind and Alex needed out, away from him before things got worse.

He had to and soon.
Slowly he started to flutter his eyes shut and soon passed out into the sweet refuge of sleep.
The next day things were different.

The sky was brighter outside, the house's aura felt lighter and John's mood was better.

John was up before Alex and woke him with a good morning kiss. Things turned heavy when Alex got carried away, cursing himself for doing so but helpless because he always went with it. John had this power over him, he could never say no. But one thing ruined the moment and that was when Alex pulled John over him there in bed, still kissing, exchanging tongues and as Alex went to toss John over so he could overpower him.

That was when John gasped with alarm and he got off Alex. What was weirded is when John tugged down his bed shirt and looked at anywhere but Alex. John looked nervous, very uneasy and scared. Alex frowned to himself, he didn't get it.

Then he figured it out, John was cutting his stomach. Alex didn't bring it up though, he didn't want to, but it hurt knowing John was hurting himself again.

Alex asked John what was wrong but John shrugged it off and he got up from the bed. Told Alex he was going to take a shower, alone. So Alex left John to his devices lay there confusion and slightly betrayed.

But later on things were better.

Alex got ready after John and he promised John they were going to the waffle house. All the way there into town John was fairly slow, he pretended he wasn't winded but Alex could hear him. John was tired and they soon got to the waffle house. With a pile of pancakes, waffles, a second helping for John and black coffee for Alex. They spoke about all sorts, things were fine and John remained calm. Happy.

Only Alex wondered just how long this false facade was going to last.

After a walk around the town, they grabbed a few things for dinner later and Alex got them a cab back. John said he didn't feel good again and Alex joked how he shouldn't have eaten so much. Nervously, John had laughed it off along with him and Alex saw that look of uncertainty on John's face once again.

When evening came Alex cooked them up something quick and light. Nothing too heavy since John said he still felt unwell. With a little bite to eat of pesto pasta and some salad it seemed to go down okay. Alex watched John carefully as he ate, John was picking around his plate. He never usually had trouble eating Alex's meals, he ate the lot if anything. But tonight John was sliding around pieces of pasta, only munching on a tomato or two. He couldn't finish everything.

That was fine.

John apologised for being wasteful and told Alex he would wash up. But Alex insisted John go upstairs, take a bath and wait for him while he washed up. So John did just that and when Alex got upstairs after doing the pots. John was already in the bath.

"Hey" Alex called softly.
John looked up over his shoulder at Alex. His long curls all riddled wet clinging to his back, Alex could've sworn John's hair had gotten longer. Also John looked fairly plumper too. Then again they had been back to New York and they'd eaten out a fair bit to say the least.

Smiling up back at him, John turns and he's ushering Alex in.

Alex is stripping off his top before working on his belt.

"You're quiet" Alex said to him.

John shrugged, he rested his chin on the the bath. Eyeing Alex as he undressed.

"If you're ill, honey, get in bed" Alex undid his belt and tossed it on the hamper.

Then John shakes his head. "No, it's okay. I'm waiting for you, come on. Get in." He told Alex and pats the edge of bath, signalling for Alex to come.

"Alright, if you say so."

With the last of his jeans, socks and briefs off. Bare assed, Alex slipped into the bath, it was deep enough, hot water sizzling his skin and he winces. "Fucking hell, John, are you trying to scald us to death?!"

John snickered, he rolled his eyes. "It isn't that hot"

"What?!" Alex gasped and then added, "Listen, you may be ill and shivery and all that shit. But I'm not!"

Alex sucked in a tight breath as he sat down in the water, up against the facet and he winces when he accidentally leans on the hot tap. "Fuck!"

John giggled, he mooches forward and he's pulling Alex towards him. "Come this way then"

"I better fucking had" Alex griped and John giggled under his breath.

So Alex did, he swishes in the water up towards John and John smiled, lovingly. He's wrapping his arms around Alex's neck and dragging him gently over. Alex can feel John's thighs curls around his lower half too.

The next thing to happen was their lips meeting, Alex staring into John's hazel abyss and he's consumed by him.

Lips pushing against one another's and Alex closes his eyes, takes in John, relishing him. John does the same.

In a series of sweet soft kisses, each one of them echoing around the bathroom, hands fumbled into each others hair. They're lost in each other and Alex goes for John's neck, kissing up and down it. Peppering it with love, murmured sweet nothings into John's ear and he can't help himself. John's arms locked around Alex's neck while he held him down, gripped in their own world, unbreakable.

Alex really could not stop.

He had no control over himself when he's grabbing his cock and pushing himself into John. It was awkward since fucking in water wasn't really something they did often. Showers were different but in the bath - this was new. Alex made it work though, he got himself inside of John and John kept his legs locked around Alex.
Between thrusts and moans Alex picked up on a weird feeling. As he's rubbing up against John, he wondered.

But brushes it off and eventually he comes, inside John, soils the bath water.

With that they're finished and out the bath they go.

John's tossing a baggy old t-shirt over him as soon as he's dry. He sits there on his bed, ruffling his curls with the towel and Alex comes in next, drying off. He takes a seat on the edge. They're both still panting away.

As they do, John sneaks up behind Alex and planted a sweet kiss on the side of his neck. Alex turned to look at him over his shoulder, smiling and reached up a hand to tousle John's curly damp nape. John locked his arms around Alex's wait as he did, rested his chin on Alex's shoulder and hummed softly.

"It feels weird not being in New York" John mumbled, with a pout.

Alex had to laugh. John wasn't wrong, it did feel weird to be back.

"I know, baby. It'll feel normal again after a few days, give or take." Alex reassured him. John still didn't look too hopeful though.

John pressed another kiss on Alex's neck.

Then another and it turned into a trail of them, all up until he got to Alex's collar bone. Alex closed his eyes at the sensation, it was lovely, he loved it when John did this but at the same time he couldn't loose track. He reopened his eyes, turned to John and said "Not right now, maybe later."

"Why?"

A big sigh from Alex.

"Jesus, honey. We've just done it!" Alex laughed. "Is that what's up? You're all pent up?"

John shakes his head. His expression went back to being hollow. "No, it's not that. Just been feeling under the weather"

"Are you sure? I feel like you keep hiding away from me" Alex told him, voice concerned.

John pursed his lips.

"I'm not" John told him plainly.

"Honest?" Alex pushed.

He knows John will lie anyway.

John stared back at him intensely. "Honest"

And he did.

"Right, well, I'll get on with some work -" Alex sighed.

"It's gone twelve" John said.
"So? Baby, I've got that major event in February, next month. I have to prepare and not to mention, I'm pretty behind on my writing schedule." Alex said.

John didn't look pleased but he says nothing more on the matter. Grabbing a fistful of the sheet, John's scuffling under it and wiggling down into his bed. "Fine, well, I'm going to sleep."

"I can work in my office, that way I won't wake you. Kay?"

As John turned on his side, he didn't reply to Alex and so Alex took that as John's overall response. In the end Alex tossed on an old top and pair of joggers, grabbed his laptop, glasses, pens and went off to find one of the spare study rooms. He went to his usual one which was just down the hall near the library.

Alex had still not found the time to read more of the books out of there. He had never found the time with John bothering him and John wasn't into his literature as such either.

For the next couple of hours Alex got on with some hardcore writing. His fingers were on fire, his eyes set on the screen and thankfully, he had managed to write up a good two chapters of his next book. Alex smiled to himself, he leaned back and slipped off his glasses so he could rub his eyes.

God he was tired.
It had been such a long day and here he was working, again. Till all hours.

But there was so much to be done. Still so much preparation for his break in February too and his editor had been emailing him none stop for the manuscript. Alex promised himself that he would get it all done, he was going to, tonight. Even if he stayed up till dawn.

Although Alex figured a little break wouldn't hurt just as long as he got back on track soon.

With his mind wandering Alex decided to pop up his Facebook and rummage around on there. He hadn't been online for days and Alex didn't like to put much down anymore. Not when he had John constantly using his phone, playing around on there and looking through his stuff.
Fuck it.
Alex decided to change his password, it was his account and he'd be damned if John was going back into his account again. So Alex did and he felt a wave of relief overcome him. John was bound to ask what the new password was but Alex was putting his foot down.

No one was really online apart from a few of his friends who lived out of the US. Alex was looking around and as he messaged a friend back. Alex wondered about a certain person and even though it was so random, he gets up the search engine and pumps in 'Francis Kinolch'.

Alex assumed this guy would be locked up.

Also Alex didn't know what he looked like either. The only thing he had to go off were the sketches John drew of him and John's work was pretty realistic most of the time. His work was spot on and so lifelike the the point where it was actually quite scary.

There were a few results but the men in the pictures were either too old or too young. None of them looked like the guy Alex had seen. The last one was someone with a picture of a cat with sunglasses on.

Alex leaned back in his seat, disappointed and he sighed to himself. Crossing his arms, sleepily, glaring at the list of results.

There was nothing, fuck all.

None of them were him.

Then Alex wondered just why even did he want to talk to this Francis. John had told him what happened, he had been abused, groomed as a kid and now Alex was digging into his dirty laundry. Yet with Alex - John's story didn't settle with him completely. Something was still very off about it all.

Knowing if he could get home of Francis, Alex would be able to ask questions. Find out if everything John had said was true.

Just then Alex's throat closed up and he felt sick.
Did he even believe John?

Had it all been true?

Alex goes back towards his laptop, he's click off Facebook and getting his work back up. He had to concentrate, this was ridiculous. Of course John was telling the true. He couldn't be that demented.

Surely.
Alex's eyes widened at his own thoughts.

He begged to differ.
January flies by in the blink of an eye.

So far, so good.

Everything had been peachy.

John hadn't acted up once.

Well, unless he was craving in the middle of the night for Alex to make them snacks or complained he was too tired to go into town. Then John went through phases where he was constantly dehydrated and said his muscles hurt. He dribbled a fair bit too. It was worrying Alex to no end and John kept claiming he was okay. Alex had offered to take John to the hospital or a walk in center. John was having none of it.

None.

John didn't want to do anything anymore, instead he wasted most of his days in his art room finishing and starting new pieces.

Currently he was working on a new painting, hours he would spend in there alone with the radio on, painting away and Alex would leave him to it.

In a sense it was great since he could get on with his own work. But John always demanded Alex stay with him for company and incase he needed him. John didn't like being alone too much and Alex couldn't blame him, this was a huge mansion after all.

John had told Alex that he wasn't used to it anymore, how spacious and empty the place was. He even said it started to creep him out once or twice at night. Whether or not this was to gain sympathy so Alex would take him back to New York yet, it was still undecided. Alex thought it may be both since John had spent two weeks away from home for the first time in his life. Of course a dusty old mansion would feel strange to settle back into.

However on one particular day leading up to March, John asked Alex if he could pick him up some new paint since he ran out of the ones he used for his current piece. Also if he could pick up a few snacks while he was there.

Alex was heading out into town anyway, he didn't mind.

With a kiss on the lips, to keep John happy, Alex got ready and went off into town.

After an hour of getting what Alex needed and grabbing what John wanted. Alex noticed that new book shop him and John went into before they left for New York. The very same one John's old ex friend worked in. Alex bit his lip and decided to hell with it.

He goes inside, it's fairly busy and Alex is walking around. He has a quick look at some of the books, a flick and read through one before walking away. He had no time for reading, Alex came inside here for a reason and that sole reason was -
"Sam right?"
Alex spotted him just over the far end on the ground floor at the back. He was putting away some new books.

The kid hadn't changed much.

Sam was still just as weedy, small and frail as Alex had last seen him. He always looked like he had a stick up his ass, a bit high maintenance and bratty. Alex didn't really like him much, even just the sight of the guy. But Sam was useful to him, he needed this guy. He was his key to opening that door to all of John's filthy little secrets.

Huffing back his fringe of blonde hair out his eyes and Sam turns to Alex.

Alex and him eyed one another, Sam looked wary. He's squinting a little as if he's trying to remember Alex's face. Alex gets it, Sam doesn't recall their little chat they had on Facebook a couple of weeks ago.

"You don't remember me?" Alex asked, coolly. He drops his bags, puts his hands into his pockets.

Sam nodded slowly, slightly unsure. "Aren't you... uh... that guy from Facebook?"

Flashing Sam his pearly whites, Alex chirped back, "Yeah, that's me. Listen, dude. I really, need your help."

With another book put away, Sam pulled a face at Alex.

"It's about John" Alex added curtly.

And he's rolling his big baby blue eyes at Alex. "Oh god" He grumbled.

Alex had to laugh. Even Sam couldn't bare his boyfriend. "Listen, listen -"

"I don't want to talk about that weirdo" Sam muttered.

Alex groaned.

"Seriously, go away."

Scowling, Alex spat, "No" Right back. He wasn't leaving.

Sam looked Alex up and down in a rude way. The Attitude. Alex arched up a brow - so it was like that.

"I just have a few questions"

Then Sam is moving another way to put a book on one of the shelves. Alex blocks him and Sam kisses his teeth.

"Please" Alex gritted.

Sam went around Alex and slid the book on its self. "Why should I give you the time of day?"

"Because I'm begging you here, kid. I really need answers and -"

Snickering, Sam says, "And John ain't giving them to you, yeah. That's how he works, if you
haven't figured that out already, jokes on you."

Alex scoffed at him. Oh really now.

"Please! For fucks sake, all I'm asking is for some help. Do you even have a single shred of decorum?"

Sam snickered. "Yeah, like I want to talk about my crazy ex-boyfriend. In the short time me and John were dating is something I like to try and forget about."

Alex felt his heart twitch just now.
So they had dated.

He knew he shouldn't allow it to get to him. But it did and Alex didn't like it. He didn't even want John anymore but just knowing another guy had been with him, it hurt. Alex hated it but he was corrupted. His way of thinking and feeling towards John. It wasn't fair.

Before Alex could utter out another word, Sam cuts him off. "You couldn't have just messaged me?" Sam sighed, he's messing around with his phone. "Dude, I'm working."

"I can see that" Alex says, plainly. "C'mon, I really need answers. Anything! John's home life, your school life -"

Sam suddenly looked skittish. It was that, this effect John had on people. They all seemed to walk on egg shells.
"Please, Sam. I've got to know, I *need* to know things, things John won't tell me. Some of his past that you know." Alex begged.

Sam glared at Alex and he slams down one of the books into it's space. Rattling it against the back of the shelf and it caught the attention of another customer who then looked wary of Sam.

Alex raised his brow in question at Sam.

Sam balled his eyes again and he just sighs.

"Fine" Sam muttered.
"I finish my shift in fifteen." He added, solemnly, his frown waring off as he spoke.

Alex's eyes lit up, finally answers.
He then grabbed out his phone. Alex looked at the time and nods. "Sure, that's cool"

Sam grabs the box of books he had and he's grunting as he's lifting them. Alex tried not to snicker, the box was bigger than him. He was such a short, thin thing. "Yeah, just look around or something. I'll meet you outside when I'm done"

"Alright" Alex responded as he watched Sam trail off with the books and back to work.

Alex did just as Sam said and he waited for him outside.

Twenty minutes later and Sam appeared from what looked like the side of the building. He was in his normal clothes now, headphones around his neck, some skinny jeans and his hoody. He looked worn out too.

Sam walked up to him and said, "So you're buying then?"

Oh.
"Come on, get out your wallet. Make it worth my while."

Alex snorted at him. This kid though.
"I mean, you do wanna talk and if we're gonna, I need a drink" Sam told him.

"Alright, you want to grab a beer?" Alex assumed he had time for a quick one.

Sam shook his head. "Nah, I don't drink anymore."

"Why's that?"

But Sam waved Alex off. "I'm sure John's told you already"

"How you guys used to get high, stagger into class pissed and drugged up?" Alex pushed, smirking.

Sam nods. "Yeah, that." He said sharply. "John always used to bring in the booze... stole it off his dad. Got me hooked up on drinking, I had to stop. Anyway, doesn't matter. Just get me a coffee or something."

"Sure, sure" Alex replied.

They wound up at Starbucks around the corner since it was the first thing in sight. Alex got Sam his strawberry frappe and Alex just settled for his usual coffee. The pair grabbed a spot at the window, sat on the high chairs and watched the world go by.

The first thing Alex asked was about John's home life and Sam shrugged. He laps up some of the whipped cream on the top of his drink.

"Sam" Alex called, stressfully, he wasn't getting anywhere. "You don't know about his home life? You were dating!"

Sam shrugged. "Doesn't mean I know everything, I mean he only told me some things. It wasn't like a real relationship, we had, y'know. It was mostly just sex and hitting the chicken joint after school." Sam said. Alex wanted to bang his head against the table. "Well, whenever we actually went to school. Ha. Mostly in-between classes -"

"Jesus, Sam. Be serious!" Alex hissed.

Glaring at him, Sam muttered, "I am"

"You're not, I don't care about all that shit. I just... fuck. I just want to know something of value! You know, like as to why John is so avoidable. Hated." Alex said the last part quietly, sadly.

Sam narrows his eyes. "What do you mean?" He asked.

Alex sighed again. "Like, what did he do, to you? To everyone? Why is everyone so... against him?"

Sam churned around the straw in his frappe, shrugged as he carelessly said, "John made it that way"
"But why?"

This is what Alex didn't get.
What happened, how did this all mould John into, well, John.

And Sam even rolls his eyes at Alex. The rudeness. Alex was so done with John and his crew. Alex pulled a face at Sam.

"It's like I told you, John, loves to be the victim. That's all he is was ever good at, cries, throws a tantrum, says its everyone else's fault when really it's all him." Sam muttered. "What else can I tell you? I mean, I've told you. He's an asshole."

Well, that Alex did know.

He wasn't getting anywhere. Alex was going to have to switch things up a bit here.
"You do know he was bullied right?"

Sam snorts.
"When?"

Alex frowned at him. "During middle school, he was bullied like hell -"

"So that makes it okay to try and stab his friends? Terrorise half the school, To poison the cafeteria? To shoot his dog?" Sam sang.

Alex's entire being leaves him.
"What?" Is all Alex can squeak out.

Sam nodded, he sips his frappe and leans back again, adding, "Yep, sorry to tell you, but you're dating a nut job. Loco Laurens." Sam chuckled aloud at that last one. He then with a smirk turns to Alex and says, "We used to all call him that, he hated it. Drove him mad." Sam then went back to slurping.

Alex gave Sam a nasty look at that.

Sam suddenly stops lapping up his milkshake and defensively says, "I didn't make that one up! Half our school used to call him that!"

"I don't care, it isn't nice!" Alex snapped. "So, go on. What else happened? I need to know, now, kid."

Sam looked offended that Alex had even called him a 'kid'. He rolls his eyes at Alex and continued. "Fine, god. Right, well, I mean, with Charles Lee - John ever tell you about him?" Alex stared
blankly at him, he didn't care, Alex just wanted answers.

Assuming Alex didn't know, Sam continued anyway.

" - Lee, he was our other best friend back then. Him and John used to butt heads a lot. But when the prank we planned which, originally, was supposed to be filling the school food with the maggots from the science lab -"

Alex pulled a look of disgust at Sam.

These kids were fucking gross, Sam, John, this Lee kid. All of them were fucked up.

"Jesus fucking Christ" Alex muttered, shaking his head. He had to question the sanity of the youth down here in Charleston. They were all crazy.

"Look - we thought it was funny at the time! Don't judge, we were kids. Shit." Sam groaned.

Alex sighed and waved him off.

"Alright, so, John said he was going to get the maggots, me and Charles Lee assumed he stole them from one of the labs. We had no idea John put some kind of weird, fucked up, chemical into the food. Kids were puking up, the cops got called in, the principle was in court, so were the lunch ladies! It was mayhem." Sam said, sighing.

How familiar it sounded. Funny how John's little tactic of evil had once struck again, only this time to Jefferson. That was what John did when he didn't like people. He poisoned them.

Still, Alex did was nod along. He was taking this all in. Everything.

" - But Charles Lee, he was so pissed because his sister was in hospital because of it. He threatened to out John. So me, Lee, we were hella mad at John. We were like 'the fuck dude!' but John shrugged it off, laughed it off, like it didn't even matter."

Alex had to snort out a laugh.
It sounded so much like John.

Oh the madness.
"Then one day after it all, John tried stabbing Lee after gym practice, they weren't in the same class though and John found him when the locker room was empty. John snuck up behind him, tried to kill him. John said he was only threatening him - I don't believe him."

Alex froze.

That rang a bell.

He remembered that Facebook post he saw Lee comment on. He did mention how John tried to stab him.

Sam went quiet, he looked deep in thought, dropped his gaze, then he slowly added, "After that, me and Lee ratted John out. That was the end of it. We couldn't take anymore shit from him. We just... never felt safe with him around. He was always giving us these looks, pushing us around after that. So, the last thing we know, is that John got expelled and we never saw him after that. Well, I didn't for a few weeks. Then one day, I step out of my car outside my house and John was there."
Alex's brow furrowed watching Sam, shake and break.

"John's there smiling, he's got a gun. One of his dad's, I dunno. I know his dad owned shit ton of guns." Alex's body trembles at the thought of where those guns were and just what John was capable of even more so now. " - I also know that, his brother, Henry, the older one, he told me that John and him were out with their old dog, Sandy -"
Oh god.

Alex's hands clammed up.
"Sandy was their golden retriever, he was pretty old. But they were out walking with him, Henry told me, he told John he was going off to college soon and he needed to leave, since Martha died like a few months before." Alex could feel his own breaths go shaky, his throat had a lump at the back of it and he felt cold. Stone cold.

Sam proceeded though, somehow managing even though he looked uncomfortable. "Dude, Martha's death changed everything. But like, they're talking and John apparently just lost it. He shouted at Henry, said everyone always left him and he shot their dog."

No.

"Not too long after John's dad suspiciously vanished too, he died they all said but -" Sam paused, staring into space. "I don't know..."
Alex finally released that breath he had been holding for so long.
"And... what did he do to you?" Alex had to ask, he needed to.

Sam stirred his frappe around with the straw, lost in his own sea of memories it seemed. His blue eyes sad, dull looking.

" - As for me, well, he just turned up when I was outside my house and John warned me to keep my mouth shut about the knife thing and everything else he'd ever done. I keep away from him, I gotta. I know his stupid dad probably paid off the principle to keep quiet about John poisoning the school though. I just know, like, I had this feeling that was what happened. He was always given everything."

Alex nodded.

He thought maybe that was what happened too.

More than likely, it probably did happen.

"There is something else -" Sam added.

Alex saw the way Sam's eyes flickered to him this time, leaving the pink bubbles of his milkshake and the floating cherry on top.

"What?" Alex asked, raising a brow in question.

"Well, it's really unsettling and to be honest, I don't think it's my place to, really, uh, tell you this." Sam said.

Alex frowned, they had come so far and now Sam was stopping.

"Why?" Alex muttered. "You can't not tell me, not after all this. C'mon man."

Sam shakes his head at Alex though. "I can't..."

"And why not?"

"Because -" Sam stammered out. He bit his lip and drifted his gaze back down to his drink. "Because, I don't know if you'll believe me"

"Oh, for fuck sake. Just tell me! Sam, just say!" Alex cried, slamming his hand on the table. Sam flinched back in his seat. "John isn't here! He isn't going to hurt you! Just say!"

"I can't! Look, you're best asking his brother, Henry. The older one. It isn't my place to tell you about... John."

"What do you mean 'about John'? You're making no, fucking, sense."

"Because I don't what to lead you on with false information if this is true. It's a family thing, you should ask Henry." Sam is getting his phone from out his pocket and getting up Facebook. Alex watches how quick and swift he was, in seconds a profile is brought up.

Immediately Alex recognised the familiar looking boy in the photo.

"Here" Sam says, he turns the phone around for Alex to see. "Henry Laurens, you'll have to explain everything and ask him if you want more information."
"Why can't you just tell me?" Alex shakes his head, sighing as he leaned back into his chair.

"Because, it isn't my place. You'll understand why when you find out."

"Is it about Francis?"

Sam pulled a confused face. "Who's Francis?"

" Doesn't matter" Alex rebuffed. "So, what's this Henry like then. Is he like John?"

Immediately Sam shakes his head. "Nothing at all"

"Awesome" Alex said. "Right, Sam. This has been, a fun encounter and all. But I best dash"

"John wondering where you are?" Sam snorted.

"Probably"

Definitely.
Sam laughed this time. "Yeah, well, good luck to you. Hamilton."

"Mm and to you" Alex said as he was sliding up out from the booth.

"Yeah" Sam says, sullenly. It catches Alex's attention, he doesn't leave just yet. Sam looked like he wanted to say something more, he shuts his mouth as he locks eyes with Alex. In the end rather than gape like a goldfish, Sam just says it.

"Promise me -" Sam said, tone softer now. Alex pulled a serious face. "That you'll get out of this relationship with John"

Ah, that.

"I know, I shouldn't put my nose in and all. But I'm just telling you, dude. Get out while you still can. Before, he ties you down."

Sam stared him down before dropping his gaze again.
"Huh?" said Alex.

Sam wafted his hand at him as if to say 'forget it'. "Just, leave. Save yourself from him, you seem like an alright guy."

"Thanks"

"Find yourself, someone who doesn't make you want to hide a bruised up eye"
Sam had noticed.

Alex bites his tongue.
It was now mid-way February and Alex had finished his proposal, story draft and extra work. He was absolutely delighted with himself. It had been tiring but worth staying up until stupid hours of the morning.

John was glad for him, he had hugged Alex and said he was proud of him. John hadn't expected that, it shocked him to see a starry eyed John Laurens with positive vibes for once.

Alex liked this change.

Still in the back of Alex's mind though, worry lingered and he did wonder if this was an act.

But Alex went with it anyway to refrain from causing any more problems between them.

As the last few days of February passed and John's birthday took place. Alex did make the effort of trying to make it special for him. He booked a place in Charleston where they could get away from the house for a night and stay at a gorgeous lodge just off the river. John had been surprised, he looked happy enough but Alex did notice a slight tinge of irritation. When Alex asked it was because John just said he felt fairly tired.

It was becoming a problem now and Alex demanded John to see a doctor. John as usual, refused.

However they made the most of John's birthday anyway, celebrating his twenty-second with good Southern food, a firework display that was taking place in one of the fields and a nice stroll during the day. Alex got John a new art set and he was delighted with it.

Then the last night they were staying at the lodge. John was lounging around on the sofa bed, cover over him, sleepily watching the TV. Alex took the time out of his work schedule to spend time with John. So that meant no writing.

John had appreciated it seemingly enough. Thanked Alex for giving him his time and Alex kissed the top of John's head, said it was fine.

Alex was lay on his stomach, reading on the bed. It was afternoon and they were both tired from their walk that morning right after breakfast. John more so.

"Alexander" John called softly.

Flickering his eyes up from his book, Alex raised his brow at John in question.

John was still lay watching the TV.

"Yeah?" Alex asked him, still waiting for him to pop out what he wanted to say.

And John snuggled down into his throw and yawned before saying, "Did you see them parents today by the river? You know, the ones with that little girl. She had that pink glittery wand thingy and kept waving it around."
Alex arched a brow. This was odd.

"Huh? Wait, what?" Alex said. "That's kinda random"

John stifled out a small laugh. "I know, yeah. But did you see them all? We were eating breakfast outside. Remember?"

Well, Alex thinks he remembered. "Kinda? I didn't take much notice"

Then silence kicked in. Alex stared at John and John remained watching the TV.

"Why?" Alex questioned.

And John turns on his side to Alex, he looked glum. "Did you see how close to the river edge she was? Her parents didn't even notice."

Alex furrowed his brow. He didn't really recall even giving the kid a second glance let alone noticing how close she was from falling in a river. Which was quite bad, really, Alex had to admit.

"Really?"

John nods. "She only looked around three"

"God... that's awful" Alex murmured.

Then John looks back to the TV. He winces as he turns and goes to sit up properly. Alex watches John with a puzzled expression. He couldn't believe how pained John seemed even just by sitting up. He really needed to get John to a doctor or something.

"Some people don't deserve to be parents" John muttered, frowning as he did and brings the throw up to his chin.

John looked so torn and bothered by this kid. Some child he didn't even know. His eyes shown that fury, he was baring daggers at the screen.

"Say, Alex."

Alex eyed him.

"I know this, might sound really insensitive but I need to ask." John began slowly, his voice softer. Alex sat upright this time. "If you and Eliza never had that miscarriage, what kind of father do you think you would've been?"

Alex felt the life squeeze out of him.

That question.

It was that question Alex liked to avoid.

The what would've been or should've been.

His lost child.

Alex could feel his soul tear one bit more at the thought of it all. As if it wasn't painful enough, he knew John was asking a harmless question. He knew. But it still hurt, even now. Today.
John is staring at Alex now, eyes wide, worried and he's stammering out, "Fuck, oh god. Sorry, no. I'm sorry. You don't have to answer that."

Alex shakes his head. "It's fine, baby. I just - It's still raw. Y'know."

"I'm an ass, I'm sorry. Alex." John was getting up from the sofa now, he's kicking off the throw and he's coming over to Alex. He plonks himself down on the edge near Alex and swivels his arms around Alex's neck. Hugging him and Alex held John back.

"I should never have said" John muffed, he breathed into Alex's shoulder, his hair was down for once and John nuzzled into it. Alex's dark locks tickling his cheeks.

Alex pulls away slowly after a couple of seconds and he looks into John's eyes as he does. John looked painful, more than him and it was genuine. Alex did best John was truly sorry for bringing it up. Although it was only a question, just a sensitive one.

"No, no. We've gotta talk about it at some point... I just always bury it I guess." Alex sighed. John reaches to brush a loose lock out of Alex's face, placing it just behind his ear. Alex smiled as he did.

"If it hurts, Alex, no, we don't." John said back.

Shaking his head, Alex goes, "John, I want to talk about it. Um, so you asked what type of father I would be?"

John looked skittish but he nods.

Lowering his gaze, Alex thought back to Eliza. When she was holding her stomach, them both smiling at one another, happily together. Things were brighter, better. But then Alex's little bubble pops and he's back there, infront of John. This was his reality now.

John watched him worriedly.

"A good one" Alex replied, curtly.

Now smiling, John says, "I know"

"Protective"

John's eyes became watery and Alex sees how his throat bobbed as he held in a sharp breath. He wanted to cry.

"Loving" Alex also added. "I would've been a good father, there for my kid. Not like my dad who fucked off once I was born. Just here, I guess."

Nodding, John kept his head down and let out a shuddery sigh. Alex heard a sniffle and he's gone to take John's chin, lifting it as he did. "Honey, what's wrong? Why're you crying?"

John shook his head and he's wiping his eyes with his sleeve. "Sorry, I just got worked up. Sorry."

"You don't have to be sorry, John. It was only a question."

Biting his lip, John found the courage to look back at Alex.

"Honey, I have to ask you something." John's interest perked up at this. Alex didn't know if he should really bring this up again since John kept denying him. He continued to act and say things
were fine. But Alex could sense they weren't.

"Hm?"

Alex reached for John's upper arm, he began rubbing it up and down softly. "Are you honestly okay? I'm really worried. You aren't yourself. Ever since we came back from New York..."

John sighed softly. "Alexander, I'm fine. I promise you. I am fine. I just have off days, what with my lithium and all."

"You're back on your medication?" Alex asked surprised.

A nod from John. "Yeah, I'm back on it"

"And is it working?"

"Yes" John shot out, he sounded irritated now. He even frowned at John. "It just sends me a little manic... I'm fine. Don't worry."

"Okay, okay" Alex said. "I just had to know"

"Well -" John says, sharply. Smiling a little too sarcastic for Alex's liking. "Now you know. Anyway, I'm gonna take a bath. You coming?"

Then John is pulling away from Alex and shuffling off the bed, right on his feet. Alex waved him off and grabbed his book from his lap. "Nah, I'm gonna finish this"

"Alright, you know where I am if you want to join" John sang.

He smiled sweetly this time and Alex's stomach churned at it. John bends down and places a quick kiss on Alex's temple before bounding off into the bathroom. After John had left the room, Alex slides off the bed and he's walking over to where John's rucksack was. Alex looks over his shoulder at the bathroom door before opening it up, rummaging inside of it and Alex is quick about it.

Looking through he sees John's pencil case, his earphones, his new sketchbook because Alex made him get rid of that old one. John had got rid of it in promise that they were starting afresh after their last bust up. Alex shuffled through everything until he found it.

John's medication bottle and Alex saw that it was completely full.

Staring down at it disappointedly. Alex just sighed.

Another lie.

Alex's eyes drift over to the bathroom door and he glares at it.

Evidently things hadn't changed then.

So if John had to lie about taking his medication, something else was up. Alex looked down at the small bottle in his hand, twirling it. It wasn't this at all.

He puts it back and re-zips up John's rucksack before going back to the bed, sitting down on its edge and Alex stares at the TV. Lifelessly.

John lied to him once again.
Nothing new and Alex hated how a spark of hope had set off within him into actually thinking John was serious.

Alex threw a hand over his loose locks, ruffling them and frustratedly growled under his breath. "Fucking hell..." Alex muttered to himself.

He knew it was too good to be true.

However Alex never mentioned it to John when he came back. Alex went on reading his book acting like it never happened. John came out drying himself off in the nude. Shameless as can be, another ploy for Alex to give him attention. John often did this when he wanted something. But Alex wasn't in the mood to fuck him or even look at him.

Alex didn't have to even predict it when John sat on the bed next to him. The next thing Alex witnessed was his book being tossed to the side and John clambering himself, still damp, climbing right over his lap. Alex tried not to appear too irritated but he probably failed. He looked right at John and John pouted.

His long loose curls clung to his nape, chest and back. All pretty, glistening and he smelt like strawberries. Delicious.

Alex sighs. "John"

Then John wraps his arms back around Alex's neck and hugs him close. It was a loving hug, John had his eyes clenched shut and he buried his face into Alex's neck. Alex was sure he heard a soft whimper, it was too quiet and Alex frowns to himself. Wondering what was the matter with John this time.

"Hey, hey, you okay?" Alex asks.

As Alex goes to take John by his waist and hold him back since he felt for John feeling whatever it was, that was going on with him. Alex holds John by his sides and he is squishing John's loose skin.

John had gained a slight bit of weight, it was cute really and even had a small stomach coming on too. He could remember meeting John and John barely ate much.

Now he didn't stop and Alex was glad for it, John having an appetite and being healthier in that sense.

"Aw" Alex chuckled out. He squeezes one of John's blooming love handles.

Blushing all while scrunching his face up. John whined loudly. "Don't!"

"Why not?" Alex laughed. "Your chub coming on is seriously so cute"

John groaned.

"Alexander"

"It is though!"

So Alex went to squeeze him again on the sides and this time Alex playfully, also a bit meanly gripped John's stomach, hard, since he lied to him about the medication.
John freezes and he's shuffling off from Alex and he's muttering something under his breath. All while completely ignoring Alex as he's wrapping the towel around himself in annoyance. As Alex is bewildered watching John do all this in a huff, he watches him storm back into the bathroom and lock the door behind him.

Alex looked back at that door and he's batting his eyes, stunned.

"He needs help... or maybe I do" Alex mumbled aloud.

And with that he flopped down on his back and closed his eyes.

These mind games were messing him up.

It was a week later and things went back to normal.

John had forgave Alex in his own way of speaking to him again. While Alex didn't realise just how badly John took those comments about his weight gain to heart. Alex found it amusing, after all the times John had slyly made remarks about his weight and laughed. It wasn't nice but Alex liked that he made John feel rotten.

Now he knew how it felt.

And he didn't like it.

Alex never felt any guilt either.

It was wrong of him but Alex got off on it.

Things were quiet between them and John went back into his usual act. He was content for now and remained working on some of his newest art pieces. Canvases of flowers, oceans and mountains. John could sit there silently and paint these for hours, with no speaking, it was as if his mind was elsewhere.

All while Alex would sit there on the other side of the art table, working on his next chapter and he would watch John. Fascinated just how far gone in his own trace John was. It often scared Alex because it was strange, John could be all smiley and good spirited towards him. But as John painted away, his eyes were blank and his face was glum. He was always thinking too much, lost
in the worries which he kept silent.

It irritated Alex to no end.

He wanted this act to be over.

Then once it was almost March, almost the very last month of his agreement with Eleanor Laurens.

John hadn't forgotten either and had been obviously counting down the months like Alex had.

Alex was over the moon, it was nearly the final month of being John's carer and soon enough he was getting his money. Then he was off.

It was the second day of the month and John was sketching in bed. A movie playing on Alex's laptop in the background. Alex was on his phone replying to an important email regarding his book event. The silence didn't last too long because John broke it with a small yawn and he peaked up. Putting his pen down and he looked over at Alex.

"What're you doing?"

Alex is tapping away. "Replying back to a client, one sec -"

John heaves a small breath and he sits up. He gives a glance at the movie playing but it isn't enough to capture his attention fully.

"Is it about that thing you're going to?" John asks. His eyes bare into Alex. "You're going to be on TV right?"

When Alex didn't reply quick enough. John rolls his eyes and sharply goes, "Alexander"

This time Alex shoots John a look over his screen. John raises his brow, expecting Alex to reply.

"What?" Alex asked him, clearly, he wasn't giving John the attention he wanted.

John balled them eyes again and he just pouts. Childishly. "You're not even listening..."

Alex shakes his head and puts his phone down, annoyed now. "Baby, I'm trying to write an important email. I've got my editor screaming at me from one direction, an agent I gotta deal with, my artist for the next book cover is trying to get hold of me. I'm trying to deal with the guy who's sorting me out for the big day." Alex snapped. John looked down, brows crossed and slumps his shoulders.

"So yeah, I'm not listening because I'm a little bit busy." He added. "I've just got so much on my plate... right now. Fuck."

Then John leans back against the headboard. He's glancing away from Alex, fixating his gaze elsewhere and crosses his arms. Alex watched John for a moment or two, he expected him to say something else but nothing came.

Thinking they were done bickering, Alex looked back down at his phone and continued with his email.

As he did, John chose to speak up again. "Because you're heading back to New York in a couple of weeks..."

It was the way John said it.
The hollowness in his voice and strained look on his face. Alex darts his eyes up at him and he felt himself go cold. John looked distressed and when he sees John wiping at his eyes. Alex sighed loudly.

Not another emotional rollercoaster. He didn't need this shit.

"Yeah" Alex told him. He wasn't going to lie. "I've got work to get back to, John. There isn't anything I can do, I made an agreement with your mother. Signed a contract. The months are up and I have to go back, honey."

Alex watches John glower there infront of him. John's neck popped out a vein or two, he closes his eyes and frowns. John's breathing turned heavy and his lips crumpled.

"Oh for gods sake, why're you crying? You already knew I have to leave soon!" Alex stressed.

John then snaps his head around at him, his eyes open and they're glassy. Dampness around them and John wiped at one of his eyes. "I know, Alex. But I don't get why you have to rush off -"

"Because of the date the event is taking place!" Alex cried. "You know this! New York is where it is!"

Nodding, John miserably says, "I know, I know. I just... I feel like you're not going to come back."

Then John stops midway. His eyes go wide and he's babbling like a goldfish. "Wait... wait. That contact you signed with my mother... I thought that was done with?"

Oh fuck.

Alex thought his heart was about to stop.

John must've sussed him out.

A trail of worry went through Alex's current being right now and he was panicking inside. If John had figured out he wasn't coming back then Alex wondered just what John would do. He was a ticking time bomb. Anything could happen and Alex was aware, John knew that he was afraid of him.

But really though, Alex knew he should know better. Rather than carry on this act of being John's boyfriend. Alex should end it. It would be better and much more fair on John. Then try and explain to him that this wasn't working. They did not have a chance in hell at having a future because John wasn't stable enough to hold one down.

There were too many problems to even count.

And Alex, he couldn't go on pretending. Even if he still loved John, he had to move on. Work on himself and John needed to do the same.

Alex didn't realise just how long his lack of reply took.

John was staring over at him, broken. His hazel eyes all pinkish, sore from the rubbing and his little nose was bright red too. As John began to shake his head at Alex, slowly, he knows now. Alex couldn't lie anymore or even bother to say anything. He couldn't.

That was it.

John had caught on.
"You never told her did you" John says, eerily. "Did you, Alex?"

Alex watched John's lips twist and shake as tears came crashing down his cheeks.

Before Alex could even reply John's face crumpled and he's grabbing his sketchbook.

Alex's eyes widen and a spark of shock flew within him. John's launched it right at him, directly at his head and luckily, Alex dodged it. It went crashing into the wall behind him, flying down the back of John's chest of drawers. It banged on the floor with a clatter.

"John" Alex exasperated, he's getting up and going over to him. "Hey, hey, look -"

But John wasn't having it.

"You never told her and you don't want to come back here do you!" John snaps.

Alex batted his eyes at him. Unsure of what to say.

"I know why you came back, the only reason you're here is to stick it out until this month is over and then that's it." John shot. "Isn't it!"

More silence from Alex.

He was frozen. He had been caught out.

"I knew it!" John shouted. "I thought it was just me, for weeks it's been in my head! But no, I was right! You never told my mother we were together! You lied to me, you told me you would tell her!"

Alex threw his head back and sighed. "John" He groaned.

"No!" John shouted.

He gave Alex a shove away from him off the bed. "You would never have cared about counting down the months, you would've come back here with me, stayed with me, no matter what. Whether she comes back or not. Since she would've known anyway -"

This was a nightmare.

"Well, maybe, I didn't want her to know!" Alex boomed back.

John's face was a picture of hurt.

" - Because you're in it for the money!" John shot.

Alex was the one to look skittish now. John laughed sarcastically when he saw. "Knew it, I knew it." John muttered, darkly. "That's it with you all, it's always about money."

"Baby -" Alex tried.

John scoffed at him and shoved Alex away from him. "Don't 'baby' me! You don't want me! Nobody does, you're all the fucking same! In it for money, all of you want to use me and just throw me away! And now - now it's worse than ever!" John broke down in a wreak there on the bed.

"You're all the exact same! Leeches, users -"
Alex flinched when John thumped a fist then on the bed.

"Oh, get a grip, for once John. Own up to your actions, stop playing the victim!" Alex shouted.

Another thump on the bed.

Alex jumped back in shock.

"You did this to me!" John screamed and Alex flinched at this tone. "You've made me like this! Using me! You're just like Francis -"

"Now hold the fuck on" Alex snapped, holding up a hand and then he points in John's face. "Do not, dare, compare me to your child molester freak fucking ex-boyfriend! Laurens! Don't!"

The family name basis must've caught John off guard. He looked like he had just been smacked.

So John flips out.

He slaps away Alex's hand from his face and snarls at him. "But you are! You just want the money! My parents dirty, rotten, fucking cash! You fuck me, lie to me saying you love me and now you're gonna run! And leave -"

Alex didn't know what to even say.

John was a mess.

There was a pang of silence.

Heavy breathing between the two of them.

"Calm down, you gotta chill for a sec -"

John wept. "You don't care -"

"I do!" Alex stressed. "John, look, baby, breathe -"

John was staring wildly at Alex, tears rolling down his cheeks and he's hyperventilating. Alex immediately shifts over to John and tries to calm him. He wraps an arm around John but John tries shoving him away, all while trying to control his breathing, Alex panicked and he's worried if John was on the verge of a fit.

He was shaking and John drops down there on the bed. He's curling up in a ball, crying and making a horrible wheezing sound. Alex is trying his best to calm John. Alex roams a hand into John's curls and he’s tousling them.

"John, deep breaths. In and out" Alex ordered softly. "C'mon, in and out"

While John was doing just that. He looked up at Alex, heartbroken and Alex met his gaze. John let out a raspy sharp breath and it's a mixture of a cry. He went back into cry once he got his breath back. Alex let him cry while he played with his hair.

"You're going to leave" John sobbed. "I know it, you're not coming back. It's all my fault."

"I never said I wasn't" Because Alex didn't now what else to tell him.

Right now wasn't the best time to break up with him.
"No, I can sense it." John tells him.

Alex sighs. "John, c'mon, try and sit up for me. I'll get us some coffee."

John shook his head. "I don't want coffee! I don't want anything! I just - I just want you to be honest with me"

"Now you're just being silly" Alex stops playing with John's hair, withdrew his hand away and John sobbed more when he did.

So John sits up, slowly and he's wiping his eyes. His curls have stuck to his blotched reddened cheeks as he did. Alex had the urge to strip them away but he decided not to.

"I don't get it with you, Alexander. I told you to break the news to my mother, I told you because I wanted it to be official. The same reason I asked you to tell your parents. But you -" John bared Alex the most heartfelt of looks. Alex swallowed thickly at the sight of it and he puts a hand over his face.

"You always skipped around everything, you had to lie to them. You always lied. If you're not lying to me about calling off my mother's contract, you're lying to your parents and saying I'm only a friend." John mumbled.

"Only because I wasn't ready!" Alex snapped.

John blinked at him, confusion written all over his face.

"I wasn't ready! I'm still not ready! You want everything too soon John, we hardly really know each other. Let's be fucking realistic here, baby" Alex said, voice straining by the second. His eyes were wild. "I can't just rush into something so serious... and you want serious."

John looks him up and down, evidently shocked that Alex doesn't want the same as him. Well, it was true. He didn't right now.

"But we are getting to know each other" John tells him. "We are!"

Alex looked away from him. It was a cold move, especially when John looked so desperate.

"So you can't commit?" John rasped.

Alex groaned. "I can! But you're making it difficult for me to do so! You've got all these secrets John. Then you're pushing me, all the time. Apartments, plans to move away, rings -"

John scowled. "What about the ring? You didn't like it?" And John is sitting up.

Alex waved him off.

"Look I can't - John! I can't" Alex cried. "There's so much I don't know about you, John. Too much, you're outbursts are uncontrollable, we fight too often, I can't help you like this. I'm sorry, I just can't. Not with you."

"So it's all me..." John says dazed.

A little too dazed.

"No, that's not it. It just isn't working -" Alex adds.
"Because of me" John murmured.

Another stretch of silence passed. Alex felt something was brewing, John had that extreme look in his eyes. Empty, wild, murderous. Yet - he said nothing. Until finally John sadly says, "Okay"

He's then getting off the bed.

Alex watches what he's doing. Carefully because when John was like this, anything could happen.

But strangely, nothing came.

John took in a deep and heavy breath before exhaling. He turns to look at Alex with a glum look. His eyes all rimmed with redness, sniffling and says, "I'm going to go and paint. Sleep in your own bed tonight."

He didn't even give Alex a chance to respond.

John was out his bedroom door in seconds and Alex couldn't help but feel terrible. He tried not to though since this was what he wanted. Getting through to John and explaining how they were better off apart. Alex was glad John was finding inner peace with his art work, it helped him. Just like how writing was therapeutic for himself. But Alex didn't put it past John to be on the edge of his next breakdown.

Sooner or later things were going to explode.

Alex could only wonder when though.

He let out another sigh and picked up his phone again, this email wasn't going to write its self.

They weren't talking properly all week after that.

John told Alex he didn't want him in his bed and so, Alex resorted to his default bedroom he stayed in when he arrived here.

The next thing to happen was John bathing alone, locking the bathroom away from Alex. They didn't talk whenever they had dinner or breakfast. Well, Alex had tried but getting through to John was like talking to a brick wall. It just didn't work. He wasn't listening.
Alex wasn't sure what to do or say.

John just didn't want to know.

Every day was the same. John stayed in his art room all day until it was dinner or lunch or to bathe. Alex hated seeing him like this though, watching John fester alone in that room. Cry alone. Alex knew he cried, he often heard him or saw him whenever Alex spied on John through the crack of the door.

The last time Alex had tried to spy on John, he was caught and John tossed his glass jar of dirty paint water at him. Shouting at him to get out and Alex had closed the door just in time to hear the glass smash against the door.

That was it.
Alex made it his business to start digging into John's past and he did what Sam Seabury had told him to. Which was go hunt down John's younger brother Henry and demand answers.

Henry was easy to find enough, he was still on Alex's recent searches over on Facebook and Alex was going to message him. Alex had daringly made the decision to check where John was.

Currently John was napping over in his room, curled up into a small ball, with no idea what was about to happen.

Alex stayed put there at his desk.

John didn't like it when he left him alone, so Alex stayed. As usual.

Looking back over his shoulder, Alex made certain John was fast asleep before starting a conversation with his brother. Letting out a small sigh of relief, Alex turned back and got him up.

He started off with a simple 'Hey' to get the ball rolling.

Alex took a swig of his black coffee as he got up his document and carried on writing. Even if Henry got back to him later or tomorrow that would be fine. Alex just needed an answer or two about all this.

Of course, he knew he shouldn't be sticking his nose in where it didn't belong though. But he had to, for his own piece of mind.
Alexander Hamilton:

Hi,

You don't know me. But I'm Alexander Hamilton, your brother John is currently in my care right now. Your mother left me in charge here at your home. I just want to ask a question or two, I hope you don't mind. Please get back to me soon.

Thanks,

Alex

That should do it.

And Alex left it at that.

It was around an hour later when Alex was watching a Youtube video between working on his next chapter, where he finally got a message back from John's brother Henry. Alex's attention was automatically snatched away when he saw the message pop up. He stopped what he was doing and clicked on the message.

Henry J Laurens:

My mom hired you?
Alex narrowed his gaze at that response. Surely he already knew?

Alexander Hamilton:

Yes, she did.

Henry J Laurens:

Okay...

There was a moment pause.

Alex chewed on his fingers while he impatiently watched the little 'typing...' on the bottom of the screen. He cursed when Henry stopped and Alex sucked his teeth before adding.

Alexander Hamilton:

Yeah, okay. I get this is weird. But any chance you could answer my questions?
Then an answer came.

Finally.

**Henry J Laurens:**

What kind of questions...

**Alexander Hamilton:**

About your brother, John.

There was another pause.

It took around five minutes before Henry responded.

Alex sat back in his chair, swirling around and gulping cold black coffee. He hoped John didn't wake up early.
Henry J Laurens:

Why?

A sigh.

Alexander Hamilton:

Because we're dating

Alex shrugged to himself. He may as well just be open and honest. There was no point beating around the bush.

Alexander Hamilton:

Hello?

Henry J Laurens:

Right.

Alex snorted at his response. What was that supposed to mean?
Henry J Laurens:

Are you alone there with John? In the house?

Now this sent chills over Alex.

Alex squints at the message.

Alexander Hamilton:

Yeah... why?

Henry J Laurens:

Are you alone with John there?
Alex felt his heart rate quicken.
What did this mean?
Shakily, Alex tapped away.

Alexander Hamilton:
You say it like it's a bad thing?

Henry J Laurens:
I'm not. I'm just surprised.

Alexander Hamilton:
Why?

Alex frowned.

Henry J Laurens:
That she would let someone else around John after last time

Alexander Hamilton:
Last time?

Alex had an incline of who Henry was referring to.

**Alexander Hamilton:**

Oh, you mean Francis.

**Henry J Laurens:**

You know about that? Omg. John *must* really trust to you.

That speared a dagger right into Alex's heart.

Of course John trusted him.

It was Alex who didn't trust John.

His brother.

His crazy brother.
Alexander Hamilton:
He does. He loves me.
Well, Alex wasn't telling lies. John did in his own twisted, warped way.

Henry J Laurens:
Interesting. And I take it you're reaching out to me for help?

Alexander Hamilton:
Why would you imply I need help?

Henry J Laurens:
Because John is difficult

Alexander Hamilton:
And?
"Get to the point, fuck me." Alex muttered to himself. He felt like they weren't getting anywhere.

Henry J Laurens:
He just is

Alexander Hamilton:
I need a proper answer. Tell me, why. What has John done?

Henry J Laurens:
What more can I even tell you? He just is! BTW - Sam told me everything. Listen, Alexander. My mother employed you as a distraction for her to get away from that house. Just whilst everything blew over, the controversy surrounding our father's death died down. She couldn't leave John alone, so she needed someone there with him. Someone to keep her precious, little, Johnny safe.

Alex remained stunned.
Alexander Hamilton:

From what though?

Henry J Laurens:

From the big, bad, cruel world.

Alexander Hamilton:

You make no sense

Alex honestly didn't get it.

Henry J Laurens:

Because, apparently, according to her, everyone is against him. She birthed a freak, blames herself for it. John always get the sympathy vote. Martha, me, James, Mary. We don't matter to her. It's always about John.
Alex twitched at that comment.

There was something between them all that Alex didn't know about John. It wasn't their father's death, not even what happened with Martha. Something more. Alex just couldn't pin point what though. It had to be something extremely dark.

This was worse than Alex had initially thought.

Alexander Hamilton:

What happened with you guys? John won't tell me anything. Sam won't either. Spill.

Henry J Laurens:

You wouldn't believe me

Henry J Laurens:

Besides, why do you care? You're getting bank for looking after John. Take the money and go. Our family affairs really don't concern you at the end of the day.

Alex's mouth dropped open.

Henry Laurens could fuck off.

It did concern him.

John was his boyfriend, for now, still. John had made it his mission to trample all over his life as of late and demanded to remain in it. So Alex needed to know before things got worse. He needed to know just who and what he was dealing with here.

Alexander Hamilton:
Because he's in my life, he's involved, too involved in my own shit. Wouldn't you want to know about someone who was in your life, that you hardly even knew?

Pause.

Silence.

Henry J Laurens:

Fine... I can tell you some things. Shit you don't even want to know.

Alexander Hamilton:

I want to

They were getting somewhere.

Alex felt his hands go clammy.
Henry J Laurens:

Well, it isn't pretty.

Alex didn't care if it wasn't.

He had already seen John's ugliness anyway, as if this would be any different.

Alexander Hamilton:

I'm listening
Nothing improved with John.

It didn't surprise Alex and he was counting down the days until it was time to leave.

Both of them stayed apart, John in his art room and Alex in one of the studies writing.

It felt weird not to be around each other anymore after being so close from the start. They were practically strangers, lonely ghosts wandering around this huge house. Passing each other like trains.

God and Alex couldn't bare anymore.

Henry hadn't gave him too much information. Only the basics facts about Martha's funeral, what happened on the day, the relationships between everyone crashing and burning. How John withdraw away from the family. General stuff but nothing big. Alex wondered if Sam was messing with his head about there being something more. Henry had said nothing valuable.

There was, it was just that he had chosen not to tell Alex.

Why - he didn't know.

It only made the situation more stressful.

When John had meanly told Alex to go to the store in town on his way out and fetch him whatever for dinner. Alex made a call to Lafayette. It was a long walk anyway and it felt good to be away out the house. Fresh air, the warm spring sun was out and Alex felt a tad more positive.

Just by being away.

So Alex told Lafayette what had been going on. He cried even at one point on the way back. Talking about it made him emotional, how he felt he was in a losing battle with John all the time. Everything. From Francis to John's manic moments, to the self harm, medication skipping, Sam, the dog being shot, everything.

He even told Lafayette about John attacking him the night they came home from the party.

Lafayette went silent, he said he couldn't believe it and sighed.

Alex knew Lafayette was fuming.

He wanted John's blood.

Alex felt better after talking with Lafayette.

He was the only one who saw through John too. Lafayette didn't like John the first second they met
back at the party. Alex hadn't told him about John spiking Jefferson's drink though. He didn't want to get caught up with the police. Alex knew Lafayette wouldn't try to get him into trouble but Alex was linked to John.

John's trouble was his trouble. Alex couldn't have that.

But it felt good to vent and chat about John.

Finally Alex admitted that enough was enough and that he wanted to just go home. Lafayette insisted he would grab a flight and bring Alex back himself since he was so upset. Lafayette begged Alex immediately to come back home to New York. He demanded Alex pack his bags and just leave John there on his own.

Alex couldn't - not yet.

He told Lafayette he had to wait until he got his money. Lafayette said to Alex not to worry about it, how he could always lend Alex the money or give it to him as a gift. Anything.

Just to get Alex home safe.

Lafayette even offered to pay for Alex's flight back, right now and pick him up.

But Alex refused his offer and that had been it.

Then, the last thing Lafayette had asked Alex was that he promise him, he would call if he was ever in trouble and to come home.

It was the way Lafayette's voice broke between his words. Alex had never heard him sound this vulnerable. Lafayette was a man of confidence, always cheerful, slightly awkward at times but he stood his ground. Always tried to keep the positivity rolling.

Right now though, it was so out of character for him to be so scared. It worried Alex deeply.

To save Lafayette the worry, Alex promised him and told Lafayette to stay put in New York.

Lafayette had his own problems, his job was very demanding and Alex needed to deal with this alone.

Or so he hoped.
When arriving back to the house with the bag of groceries, Alex quickly put them away and decided he would start dinner later. He yawns, stretches, makes some coffee before heading up to his usual study spot.

He had one last paragraph to finish before almost half of the novel he was writing could be deemed as finished. It was exciting.

Alex smiled to himself as he headed up the stairs, proud of himself, his mind in a good place and he's just rounding a corner now.

Hoisting himself up the banister, walking down the hall to his study room and as Alex pushes the door open. He almost drops his mug of coffee.

John was there.

Alex's eyes widen at the sight of John just sat there, back turned to Alex at his desk.

"John?" Alex began, warily.

That was when Alex saw John on his laptop. No.

His heart stops.
"What're you doing on that?" Alex raised his voice, it seemed John wasn't hearing him properly.

Alex didn't get it. He had changed his passwords. So he didn't understand how John had managed to log in.

John was stiff as a board. His eyes were baring holes into the screen, his face blank and entire being looked as if it were frozen. Stuck in time.

"John?" Alex called again and he's going over to him.

His footsteps slowed down as he neared John and realised John was shaking. Alex's stomach twisted.

He didn't have a good feeling about this at all.

"I couldn't get on your phone earlier because the password is different -" John quietly said and slowly, he turns to look over at Alex there behind him. "Even on your laptop, it's changed."

Alex felt all the heat in his body rush out when he saw that icy look John gave him. Hazel eyes, stormy, blazing away.

"Why is the password different?" John asks, simply. Scarcely.

Oh god.
He wanted to know.

"Alexander" John hissed out.

Alex's gut dropped when he saw John looking through his messages.

John was on his Facebook.
Shit.

Panic arose in Alex, he wondered just how many texts John had read.

"Why are you even on my account anyway? How did you even get on there?!" Alex shouted. He's so angry, just when he thought he had a bit of privacy in his life. Even that was forsaken. John had taken that too.

"What the absolute fuck!" John rasps, his breathing became heavier. Alex was watching him with worried eyes.

Alex's gut leaped when John picked up the laptop, he's gripping it and Alex is getting ready to pounce.
Not his work.

No.
Just no.

Fuck.

"John, what're you -" Alex shakily said. "Be careful with that! My work is on there!"

"I don't fucking care! I want to know what is this!" John screamed at him.

The conversations were up with Sam and his brother, Henry.
Alex shamefully dropped his gaze. He gripped the bridge of his nose and squeezed it.

He didn't know how to explain this one.

"Why are you fucking messaging him?! That asshole! Oh, Jesus. Oh my fucking god." John shouted, hysterically.

"John, calm down" Alex spat.

"My brother is here too -" John snorted, snarling at the screen as he does. Then what gets Alex is the loud 'bang' John makes when he slams the laptop back down on the desk.

"Fucking watch it!" Alex shouts. "I've spent months working on my book!"

But John ignored his cry. John is pointing at the screen, tears welling up with the fury in his eyes. 
"You even had the nerve to message him too, oh isn't this just great. All of you, teaming up against me. Ganging up on me!"

"It isn't like that!" Alex rebuffed, breathily.

"But it is! Alex! It is! I've read everything!" John shouted. "How you don't trust me! You think I'm insane! That I've got too much emotional baggage, you think my happiness is an act! You're saying, here to my brother how you don't think we'll even last and you told me, we could work it out!"

"John" Alex sighed.

"No!" John shot. "Shut up! Shut up, Alexander! Fucking close that trap. For once!"

Alex scoffed at him.

John had some nerve.

Alex's fist balled up. He was getting ready to suckerpunch the life out of him. Because he finally had enough with John Laurens.

"You listen to me, you had no right to fucking go behind my back like that!" John hurled, pointing at him this time. Making Alex feel downsized, like a silly child. "How could you! Alexander! How could you! Why would you do this?!"

He had to be careful here.

John's eyes narrowed at him, hurtfully and John quietly muttered, "You betrayed me"

"No, John. I had to -" Alex stammered. He walked over to John closer and John is standing up from the chair now. Glaring at Alex as he does.

"You didn't, you really didn't. But you did anyway." John says, voice breaking. "You did"
Silence hit them.

John stared Alex down. Bitterness lay upon his pretty features and Alex looked a mixture of ashamed, angry, upset. He didn't know what to feel right now, John had him cornered. He had found out somehow. Now he had seen this.

This was his turning point and Alex felt terrified.

John said nothing else, he takes Alex laptop and he's walking towards the door. Alex goes right after him, panic stirring inside him and he's pulling on John's arm.

"No, no! Please! John, no!" Alex begged. "Not my work! Fucking wait! Stop!"

But John paid him no mind.

John said nothing.

His eyes were planted on the door and he was leaving.
Alex tried tugging on his hoody sleeve and John shrugged him off.

"Don't John! No! You fucking crazy bastard! Stop!"

Alex followed John, right to the door. John wouldn't let go of that laptop either.

"John, the fuck. Calm down! We can talk about this!" Alex plead and he's trying to grab his laptop. But John dodged him before swivelling around on his heels.

He quickly faces Alex with the most stoic expression.

"You know what, I've got a better idea. How about this -"

"No, John! No!"

John launched it right at the wall.

He hurled it like a ball being thrown for a dog. John's face twisted, fiercely as he did too. He meant it when he threw it. Completely.

Not one shred of remorse of guilt was there either as it went flying.

The laptop bounced at one of the bookcases, a loud crack was heard before it fell.

Alex watched it in motion.
His whole body went cold.

he watched as it shattered and hit the floor with a clatter.
"NO!" Alex bellowed.

His shot -
His shot was gone.

John watched coldly as Alex fell to his knees, skidding on the wooden flooring as he goes to his laptop. "No, fuck, no, no!" Alex wept. "No!"

All of his word. His hard work. Gone.
This was the worst.

The laptop screen was smashed, the head was hanging off, a few of the keys had come off and parts of the bottom had gone off too.

A nightmare, it was a whole nightmare.

Alex is panting heavily, tears gathering his eyes. John - he went there. He went there alright. Alex glared at his boyfriend with the nastiest of looks. Ready to strangle him.

Oh he went there.
"The fuck is the matter with you!" Alex screamed, it echoed the walls of the study. John stood there, staring at Alex hatefully.

John shrugged at him.

That set Alex off.

So in seconds, Alex gets up, he's a mad man, he pounces towards John, nails gritting into John as he is shoving him into the wall and John wailed as he jilted into it. "Why would you do that?! Why!"

"Because you deserve it! You crossed me!" John yelled back. "You don't do that to me! Don't you dare sneak around me, Alexander! Ask me, face to face!"

"You lie!" Alex shouted. "You never tell the truth! You skip around everything, you crazy, unstable, controlling fucking asshole!"

This time Alex does raise his fist and he aims it in John's direction.
He's flinching from Alex.

Alex stiffened and his heart almost stopped.
His fist stops in midway.

"No!" John squealed.
Alex couldn't do it.

"You're fucking nuts!" Alex shouted in his face.

But screw it, Alex couldn't hold it in. Not anymore, not after this. This was too far.

Alex grabs John, goes to push him over and John is turning from Alex. Covering himself, his
stomach.

"No!" John cried. "Don't hit me! You can't - no"

John looked pathetic there, his loose curly pony tail undone, messy, tears down his face, his usual fit of crying to get Alex to feel sorry for him. He was a total mess and John just stood there. Losing himself and spiralled into another sad meltdown.

"Don't Alex... shit. I'm sorry."

Alex didn't stay to watch him or calm him down.

"Bullshit" Alex gritted out.

He didn't stick around.

It was excuse after excuse.

Well no more.
Alex didn't bother picking up what was left of his laptop. He left it there, his career was over. Alex had nothing to present to the event because he hadn't had the chance to save all of his latest work on his pen drive or upload it to his dropbox. He hadn't remembered and that pissed Alex off when he realised. How could he have been so stupid not to have saved his work?

He was a writer! But, not that it mattered anymore

His work was lost.
Alex didn't have back ups. Everything was ruined.

His career was going to go to shit.
He wasn’t going to get anywhere or be someone.

Because of John.
All because of him.

It was time to leave.

Chapter End Notes

UH OH
Alex refused to even be in the same room as John.

He couldn't.
He was fuming.

Furious with John.
Enough was enough of this.

He was going home, Alex had already booked a flight back to New York on his phone. His laptop still lay in pieces, Alex was hopeful he could get it repaired back in New York. He was going to try.

But he couldn't take anymore of John. Alex hadn't told John yet about him leaving either, he didn't care because there was no way Alex was spending another week in this house.

If that was what John did to him for speaking to his brother and ex-classmate, then Alex feared what would happen if he went dwelling into anymore of John's past or personal business. It was
scary for Alex and he was getting worked up by the thought of John finding out he was going to go for good.

At this point, the money didn't matter. Alex had already made up his mind and now, he decided his safety came first. Including his state of mind. He didn't need to put up with this negativity, the lies and drama.

Alex could do better.

The day after on the Friday afternoon was when John finally spoke to him after two days straight of them not speaking.

He knocked on Alex's door which surprised him. Usually John would've just barged in and Alex caught on, automatically that John was trying to make up. He always did this after they argued. Either John would guilt Alex enough into thinking it was his fault or John would mooch up to him, be nice as cherry pie and sweet to win Alex back over.

It wasn't going to work this time.

Alex told him, not to let his guard down.

No more.

Sighing to himself, Alex tossed in another shirt into his case and coldly, he called "Come in"

John did.

The door slowly moved open, revealing a dishevelled looking John Laurens. Alex didn't bother looking his way, he didn't want John to think he could get away with this or give him a shred of attention. John liked to play games, he would find a way to make Alex feel the worst of the worst.

So Alex kept his eyes on his phone as he was packing his bag and case.

He never saw the way John's face turned into alarm. Realising that Alex was leaving, it was serious this time. Although his look of shock soon vanished back to its default pitiful expression and John slowly traipsed inside the room.

Alex pretended to look on his phone but really he was watching John in the corner of his eye move towards him. Alex's heart rate picked up, he was panicking inside and having a secret meltdown. Each foot step at a time scared Alex more and more.

He didn't show his fear though. It was difficult having to act strong when really Alex wanted to crumble.

John sat away from Alex. He took the edge of his bed near his case and Alex was on the other side, sat on a chaise. This gorgeous Parisian red velvet chaise was probably the only thing Alex would miss out of this place when he was gone.
The silence was deafening.

Alex had never heard silence quite this loud.
It was suffocating.

John was fumbling with the end of his ponytail, he was thinking, deeply and a tad nervous. Alex
shifted his gaze to John and saw him staring into space. John only ever did that with his hair when he was anxious. Alex's heart sank when he saw John's arm too.

Right there.

Two new deep red gashes.

He had started self harming again.

Alex stared at it and as he did, John flickered his eyes in his direction. They were red rimmed, sore and one of John's eyes looked bruised. Alex assumed John must've wrecked himself up again. There was nothing Alex could do, he had offered John help so many times and now Alex didn't see the point. He was a lost cause.

More helpless than helpless.

Either way, Alex wasn't even going to get involved. He had to be cruel here. What John did to himself next, it wasn't on him.

John had purposely gone off and shown these to Alex in the hope that it would move him. The emotional blackmail was getting a little boring now though.

With a sigh, Alex grabs another top and his headphones, throws them into his duffle bag quickly. He's ignoring John, there was nothing to say.

Not a single thing.

"You're leaving" John states, quietly. It wasn't even a question, he was just stating facts to himself.

He kept his eyes on Alex. Watching as he packed.

Alex nods. "Yep"

In went a pair of socks and some historical book about Charleston Alex picked up while he was here. John glared at it going in his case and then speared daggers at Alex.

"When?"

Alex bit his lip and decided to just tell John, get it over with. "Monday was the only flight I could get" Alex mumbled. " - That was the earliest"

John's eyes narrowed at that and then he fell back into his saddened state. John slips out his hair tie, his curls came falling down and he's ruffling his curls, scratching at his scalp. He leans back to watch Alex pack more. John was in a daze, it was all too quiet and Alex goes into one of the drawers to dig out some more of his things before turning back to John.

"Do you have to do this?" John not far short whispered.

Alex looked over at John.

Their stares heated and the silence growing again was becoming more uncomfortable for Alex.

He drops his head and Alex dumps a sweater into his case. "John, please. Not today."

So John leaves it.
John stares at the pile building up in Alex's case and he's beginning to frown. "Will you be coming back?"

No.

No Alex wasn't.
Alex shrugged.

If he said no, he didn't know what would happen to him.
"For now, I think we need a bit of space." Alex tells John firmly. "It's for the best"

John looked up at him brokenly. Hazel eyes glassy and wide. "That wasn't an answer" He uttered out.

"Look, John. I'm not arguing with you today" Alex says, snippily. "I'm done, arguing. Fighting. No more. I'm tired of it."

"So am I" John sniffled and he's wiping at one of his eyes. Alex tried not to roll his own, here they go again. "I don't want you to go, Alex. Can't you just think about this? Please."

"I already have" Alex replied, much too quickly for John's liking. John scowls. "And we need time"

His firm words had John looking at him like he had lost the plot. As if this were some kind of big joke, it wasn't. It really wasn't.

"Alex" John tries one more time.

Alex shut his eyes, tightly. His hands grit at the t-shirt he's got hold of and Alex is trying so hard to block John out.

John sniffled, he's wiping his eyes and he's shuffling on his knees there on the bed, going over to the other side where Alex was. Then John is pushing the case aside so he could be right there near Alex.

"Alexander, love." John said, his voice cracked as he did.

It did tug at Alex's heart strings, a tad. Not to mention the pet name added in seemed to do the trick too. John never used affectionate names much, Alex tossed them around willy nilly. It had never been John's thing and whenever he did, he meant it or that it was serious.

"Please, just think about this" John wept.

He's burrowing his eyes right through Alex's soul. Hoping, wishing, Alex would turn around and tell him otherwise.

But Alex couldn't.

When Alex didn't answer and he fumbled with the t-shirt in his hands, staring down at it. Lost in
his own thoughts. John was staring up at him, clearly in panic mode and he's reaching for Alex's hands. He grabs one of them and John pries Alex's hand into his own. Alex felt John squeeze at it, only gently. But enough to send out the message that he was terrified and apologetic.

It didn't move Alex.

He wasn't letting it.

"Please" John strained. Alex finally looked over to him. "Don't go"

Then Alex's hand went limp and finally John dropped it.

"I'm sorry" Alex tells him.

John's breath got caught in his throat, his words stuck for a second. He made a low gasping noise of shock and it was kicking it this time. Alex could see that John realised that he had fucked up big time.

As John's gaze lowered and he withdrew his hand back. He miserably sits there and stares into space.

Alex figured he would give John some time alone and as Alex is about to leave the room. John stops him by quietly asking, "What would make you stay?"

He was waiting for an answer and Alex couldn't give him one.

Alex met John's piercing sad gaze and he shrugged before slowly leaving the room.

Once he left, John grabbed one of Alex's tops from in his case beside him and cradled it.

Buried his face into it and silently, he fell to pieces.

At around late afternoon Alex was sat outside on one of the benches in the courtyard reading.

It was probably the only place he really liked and enjoyed here at the Laurens estate. The courtyard with its cobbled stones, gorgeous hedges which were no longer often groomed and cut had bloomed wild now, with flowers and the odd buzzing bees that swarmed around them always caught Alex's eye.

The stone fountain that stood in the middle of the yard was bone dry. No water poured from it.
anymore. Still, it was beautiful.

With the birds tweeting, the soft gentle spring breeze tickled Alex's cheeks from the odd wisp of hair and Alex was in a better state of mind now. He felt a bit more cheerful and though he was leaving, Alex felt that it was the right thing to do.

He didn't know what was going to happen to John though.

Alex did care about him, he would never stop caring for John or loving him. But his decision was made, it was best if they were apart. Possibly for good.

The thought of leaving John caused a horrid ache in the pit of Alex's gut. He was leaving him.

Slowly Alex drifted his gaze from his page, looking at the words for too long had sent his eyes funny and he wasn't really taking the story in. John was on his mind again. Alex sighed softly, he looked up to the cloudy sky. A few birds passed as he did somewhere up there in midair.

Alex thought long and hard as he did.

His mother crossed his mind, it surprised him because he didn't often think about her. Unless she was mentioned or something reminded him of her. But right now, she was there in his thoughts, his sea of memories coming over him like a crashing wave.

For a second Alex found himself drowning.

The hurt overwhelmed him and Alex's brow crumpled.

It was times like this where he needed her. Where he missed her greatly and just wished he could talk to her about things like this. His love life, his worries, his fear and pain. Alex heaved in a sharp breath and exhales, panting as he did.

How he wished he could talk to her about John.

Maybe she was watching and guiding him along this path, away from him. Alex liked to believe his mother watched out for him, when she died, Alex had been lucky to be placed with the Washingtons. A loving couple. Alex knew it was her doing. Even in death she kept him safe, away from harm.

It could be the same now.

Alex squints his eyes at a passing cloud, his book in his hands still and he tilts his head.

He wondered if his mother was with his child.

Alex smiled at the thought, a bit too fondly.

She would be. Oh, he knew that. She was going to finish her duty as a mother someway or another. Even if it was from beyond the grave.

Alex chuckled to himself at the thought of that. It brought him a slight dose of comfort at least. He wasn't alone in this.

But then -
"Alex"

Great.
Alex's bubble of joy popped when he slowly glances to the side of him. He sees John there, still in his comfort clothes with a hoody tossed over his loose bed shirt. John hadn't been getting dressed properly for days which wasn't like him. Alex assumed this was all part of his phantom 'illness'.

But it does catch Alex's attention when he notices just how pale John had become there in broad daylight. He looked paler than usual, his milky tan seemed non-existent by this point.

He watches John stroll over toward him, he looked worn out. Alex drops his eyes to his book, closing it and he bounces them back up to John.

John slows his pace as he comes closer.

"I knew you'd be here" John says. "You always come here to read, to write, to think... I saw you from the art room. I just wanted to talk. Kay?"

All Alex did was let out a small 'mm'. Not for much longer.

As John trudged closer, he said, "I've been thinking, a lot.."

Alex remained staring at John, provoking him to continue to get whatever it was he needed to say out.

John bites his bottom lip and looked away for a moment. Preparing himself.
Finally.

John speaks.

"I've decided I want to tell you everything" John says, his eyes were void and expression glum. "I have to"
Alex arched a brow in question.

John looked so lifeless.

"Everything, Alex. from start to finish. No more lies, I promise."

"How can I trust you?"

John studied Alex, deeply looking into his big brown eyes. John narrows his, hurt filled in his own.

"Try"

Alex nods.

He wasn't too sure about that, but if John insisted, Alex decided he would listen at least.

He had come this far.

"I think it's time, you knew. I just -" John paused, he looked scared for a split second. "I don't know how you'll take it. Let's just drop the laptop thing, the Facebook messages, what happened with Jefferson, your parents - please. I just have to tell you this..."

"Not again, John -"

John sighed. "No, if it means us, working it out. I'll tell you."

"God, John -"

"No, no. Alex, there is something you need to know. Something huge, it's -." John stops again, he's working himself up. "I'll start off with my sister, Martha."

Alex looked him up and down.

He sensed this was going to be a long story. So Alex budges up and John takes the hint. He awkwardly sits down next to Alex and John is close enough. Alex shuffled away a bit more from him. John must've noticed, his throat bobbed and he looked pained from it.

It felt weird to be this close to each other.

With them keeping their distance from one another, they truly felt like a pair of strangers on a good day.

"So -" Alex cut through the lurking silence. "What happened?"

John clasps his hands together and sits forward as he did. He's looking on to the sky, lost for a moment. Alex sat back and watched John. He sees the way John's gorgeous curls waved like a flying kite in the soft breeze. Evening was approaching because the clouds among the sky were turning into this cotton candy pink, yellow combination. The tints of milky blue now slowly fading away.

Alex wondered if John was thinking about his sister.

That was the thing with this view in the courtyard, it had you burrowing through old memories. With the open space, warm air and mountains from afar in the distance, it was hard not to.

"The last time we ever spoke to each other, we fought." John tells Alex.
Alex's mouth twitched and he's biting the inside of his cheek.

He didn't know what to say.

It seemed to always be a reoccurring pattern with John and people. Always arguing, fighting.

John closed his eyes for a moment.

"It was the day she died too" John told him.

Alex had a terrible feeling.

He knew what was going to come next.

"- Literally seconds before she died" John softly says, he re-opened his eyes and sits back so he's aligned with Alex. "It's been almost four years since then and I still relive it almost everyday."

Alex swallowed thickly, it hurt when he did. Dread was coming, it was coming.

"What happened to her?" Alex asked, quietly, once he found the courage to do so

John kept his eyes fixed on those passing clouds. A plane was going over this time, leaving a scarred up trail as it did.

"John?" Alex pushed.

He didn't want to send John over the limit here. Alex knew he was going to have to be careful now.

"She fell over the third floor bannister railing" John coldly said.

A pang of horror and terror hit Alex right in his stomach.

So, that was how she died.

John looked over to Alex this time, his face lifeless, pale and eyes sad. "I swear to you, I'm not lying. That's how she died."

Alex nods.

He isn't sure how to digest this but Alex tries to. Imagine, dying from a horrific fall right off the top floor of a grand antebellum house. Alex assumed she must have gone out like a light if the fall had been that tragic.

"We were arguing -" John's voice turned shaky. He let out a long exhale before adding, "And -"

Alex watched him.

Waiting.

"And -" John said again, desperation and tears clogging up in his eyes.

He couldn't get it out.

John was stuck.

Alex didn't want to wait anymore.
"Did you push her?"

Well, it was the wrong thing to say alright. John immediately scowls at him, Alex shuffled away when he sees that look. That had been a stupid move. Alex sighed aloud and he said, "I mean, I don't know what else to think. You look and sound guilty -"

"Only because I have to live with this, what I saw! That's why!" A tear rolled down John's cheek and he looked betrayed. "But no, I did not push her. If that's what you're implying, Alexander. I did not! Why must you always think the worst of me? Why?"

Alex felt shame.

He did.

He always thought terrible of John.

But it was his own fault for letting Alex turn against him.

"I did nothing to her!" John lamented. "Nothing! She did it to herself -"

"What do you mean?"

John cut his eyes at Alex. "She fell! Okay, she fell!"

Now it was Alex's turn to look as down as John did.

"Martha, she was trying to push me off there!" John cried, while crying. He's using the sleeve of his hoody to wipe his eyes. Shakily sniffling as he did. "Because we just couldn't stand each other anymore. We were close, as kids. But when she did that -"

Alex flinched nearly at the way John's eyes bulged.

The fury in them was enough to eradicate all the flames in hell.

"That" John belted out again.

Alex's eyes turned worried for John.

He saw the way one of the veins popped in John's neck. It looked painful.

"I couldn't forgive her, she knew I loved him. Alex, she knew about us." John say, hiccuping another small sob.

Alex frowned. He knew who John meant.

"Francis?" Alex asked, hatefully.

John nods.

"Jesus, wait, so you're saying this guy was fucking you and your sister?" Alex asks, shocked. His own eyes almost falling out his head this time. John flickered his eyes over to Alex, it was clear. Alex understood that look.

"Holy fuck" John spat. "Oh god"

John wiped another tear from his eye. "She did it out of spite because of some shitty argument we
had. He was her tutor too, Francis tutored us all. I just never knew he would do that to me though. Fuck her."

Alex was in a state of shock.

"Not even 'fuck her' he was fucking her, multiple, fucking times!" John boomed. "Fucking us both, said he loved me. But how -"

John's shoulder shook and he wept for a moment. Alex didn't know what to even do. He did reach out a hand to John but John bat it away. "Fuck off. -" John hissed at him. Alex frowned at John. "I'm only trying to help" Alex snapped.

This time John turns fully around to Alex and he's glowering at him. "So, now you give a shit? You've been ignoring me for days on end. You're fucking leaving anyway, so why reach out to me!"

"John, look, I was -"

"No!" John growled.

"It's the same with you all! All of you! You all leave me, you all love me and then leave me! You, Francis, Martha -" John babbled hysterically. Alex didn't even get a chance to speak because John threw him off. "But that bitch, that fucking bitch. She fucked me the most out of you both. Oh, she fucked me the best, real good. Right when I found out she was having his fucking baby!"

Wait.
Alex went cold.

What?
Martha had been pregnant to that monster.
Alex put a hand over his forehead and he's rubbing at it. He's looking up to the sky, closing his eyes for a second or two.

What a mess.

John didn't stop there.

"- His baby, his child!" John rasped bitterly. "Why was she allowed to have that? And why, why was I -"

Silence.

Alex didn't know how to take this time. He couldn't deal with this.

John broke down.

"Why was I -" John gasped out to himself. "It wasn't fair!"

"John" Alex tried. "You need to take a deep breath, calm down."

Letting down his guard would probably ruin the distance Alex had tried to create between them. He mooched over to John and slipped an arm around his lower back. Rubbing circles around John as he cried his eyes out.

"Hey, sh. Sh." Alex says. "It's done, John. Remember that, the worst is over."

But John shook his head. "No, no. You don't know how much more shit there is to all of this..."

Alex sighed.

He didn't know what else that was terrible could have even happened to this family. Especially John.

If a creep like Francis had impregnate a school girl and slept with a teenage boy. Alex didn't know what else could top this.

"John, let's get you back inside. I'll cook us something, hey. Look, I'll even let you stay with me tonight. Okay?"

It was as if John never heard him.

John's crying slowed down and John was staring into the distance, the stars were out now. Twinkling brightly. It always amazed Alex how brightly and just how many stars you could see here in the south. Unlike New York where every helicopter or plane was basically a star of its own. Here, it was phenomenal.

Alex followed John's gaze and watched them with him for a few minutes. John's shaking breath and sniffing filled the silence.

"Even though I loved her, Alex. She deserved it." John murmured. His glassy eyes spaced of any emotion. Alex looked to John. "- And so did he."

Now John met Alex's gaze.
The look of pure hate featured there in those hazel eyes.

Alex's skin crawled.

"The last time me and Francis fucked, I asked him if he did sleep with Martha. He didn't even lie to me, he just confirmed it. He said 'yes' and it hurt -" John rasped.

Alex added a few more circles of comfort there on his back. John leaned into the touch and he drifted slowly against Alex. John's head against the crook of his neck and Alex cursed silently to himself. This was a mistake, this small miscommunication. Alex had gone and done it now, John wasn't going to let him go after this.

"I wish he had lied" John says, clearing his throat. "Just so... it didn't have to hurt"

Then Alex speaks up.

"But John, at least he didn't lie. You deserve better than lies. Jesus." Alex told him.

John slowly lifts his head up, he's looking up at Alex and right into his eyes. "Then what do I deserve?" He asks Alex, emotionally, lustfully.

It raises all alarm in Alex.

John is giving him that look and he's dropping his gaze at Alex's lips.

Alex can see John begin to inch forward, he's going to kiss him. They couldn't. Not now.

He knew what this would turn into. John in his bed, them sleeping together and everything would repeat itself.

So Alex turns his head from John, takes his hand off John's back and he moves away slightly so that John had to sit up. John frowns, obviously upset by this and he's sitting upright again. He doesn't take his eyes off Alex. Clearing hating how he's been scorned - again.

"You're right, I do deserve better." John spits, a bit too angrily.

Alex knows he's pissed that he didn't return his feelings this time. But they couldn't keep going in circles, no matter how emotional John was right now. This was the wake up call he truly needed.

"I lied to my parents, told them Francis raped me after that."
Oh god.

Alex shot his head around at John. He meets John's icy gaze.

"What?" Alex gasped.

John shrugged nonchalantly.

"I did and I don't care. Once Francis told me he fucked my sister, I lost it. There wasn't much Francis could do." Then John giggled darkly. Alex's brow knit at the reaction because this was some sick shit. He looked back to Alex, his eyes smiling just as horrifyingly as his dimpled smile was.

"I had evidence, hell. I was leaking in it!" John chuckled. He budged Alex as he did as if this was supposed to be funny.

All Alex did was scrunch up his face.

This was grim.

So gross.

Alex's body felt like lead.

And he wanted to run. Scream. Shake John and tell him he was nuts. Everything.

But Alex didn't.

He remained sat there next to John as the night took place. The outside lights automatically came
on and glimmered around the courtyard. Crickets croaked and Alex was starting to feel cold. They had been sat outside for ages now. Alex wondered just how long.

John's smile soon wore off though and his eyes turned sad again. "But even though I had that bastard locked up. Martha was still carrying his baby. She didn't want to give it up either." John told him. "Father, he was adamant she get rid of it but it was too late. She was already seven months gone by this point and the day she died, it was the same day she told me it was Francis's child."

Alex watched him and John's face scrunch up.

"We all thought it was just some guy from her class, she was shamed and never allowed to leave the house." John said. "I never once suspected it was Francis, not when he was mine."

John meets Alex's eyes again and they were broken.

"He said he was mine, I thought he was mine. He was mine." John whispered.

Alex felt his heart break for John in a way. He really must've loved Francis, it was sick and wrong. Alex did not agree with what they had once had but to see John in this state. To see what Francis had done to John and caused within his family. It was disgusting.

John wiped his eyes from blooming tears.

"But father, oh he did not let it go with me though. Nope." John gritted out. "He blamed me, he had Francis locked up and beat me. He dragged me up to that room, remember that one you saw Mary's wheelchair in? -"

Alex's blood ran cold.

"No one could hear me scream and cry -" John added. "And he beat me, he beat me until I was black and blue -"

"He what?" Alex stammered.

No.

John nodded, tearfully. Heartbroken.

"I know, I lied! I know. It was wrong, I had to. I had to get back at him! But to my father, I was the one at fault, it was all me!" John sang, bitterly. "Always me! I'm the corrupt one, the black sheep of this family! The one who wasn't born right. The freak!"

Alex shook his head. "No, John, Francis groomed you -"

But John spoke right over him.

"Fuck him, fuck her, fuck my father! They all deserved what they got. Francis, he deserved everything that for hurting me. I ruined him, I ruined his career. I ruined his life -" John cried. Alex watched in horror. "And I'm satisfied!"

"John, listen -"

"No one does that and gets away with it! I lied, so what?" John spat out manically. " - And fuck her! He can rot in jail for the rest of his life and I hope she burns!"
Alex watched John have his little meltdown in shock.

He was speechless, for once.

Then John looked at Alex and said to him "Want to know what else?"
Alex was listening.

"It's Francis's" Martha told him, in a faint whisper.
With a tight chest, John began to shake.

John couldn't breathe.
It hurt to breathe.

It hurt to live.

That couldn't be right.
Not when -

Not when he was also -
This couldn't be happening.

"He's mine" John murmured, to himself and he's in a trance.

There was no way this could be true. Not Francis, not his darling Francis.

The same man that dried his eyes when he cried, wrapped up his wrists in bandages during the late afternoon sessions of their one to one time after John endured another hellish day at school. Took his virginity at the mere age of fourteen, told him he loved him numerous times, fucked him into an oblivion until John went light headed and saw stars.

Told John one day, promised him, that he would take him away from this dump.
Francis had sworn to John he would be his.

Always.

Now it hurt and the sky was crashing down on him.

Francis lied.

"It isn't Francis's, whose is it really?" John asks, quickly. He's in denial, there was no way.

Martha nodded. Her curly long hair wafted around the perfect curved heart-shape of her face as she did. She was a beautiful girl, John had always envied her in a sense. They looked similar but Martha was a woman. Men liked her. Her beauty, her charisma, her delicate curves and body. She was a stunner.

Yet deep down, John understood why Francis could've set eyes on her like that. In that way.

He couldn't have.
No.

Not Francis.
"I got you back, Jack. You thought you could control me, hurt me the way you did?" Martha sneered.

John's heart stopped.

"No" John spat. "You're lying, stoppit. Why would he -" Then John paused.

His sister's smile grew as her dark eyes speared through him.

When had his sister become this ugly?

She was no longer beautiful. Not to him, no, not anymore.

John's heart was breaking.

"You bitch" John uttered out, brokenly.

He squinted his eyes at her. Martha stood there, opposite him, looking like nothing fazed her. John couldn't believe if this was true, then she was going through great lengths to really hurt him. Not only to take his lover but to birth his child. John's niece or nephew, their father, his Francis.

Yet -

John had his own secret.

He bit his lip and felt the tears sting at his eyes, they never fell though. The shock wouldn't allow them to.

"You really thought he wanted you -" Martha said, spitefully. "He never wanted you, ever. Why would he want someone like you, Jacky? You fucking dunce."

John scoffed at her. "You're lying, this is you -" John stuttered. This wasn't real. "This is just you trying to spite me, isn't it?"

"No" Martha muttered. "It's the truth"

"You cunt" John snapped. "You lying cunt!"

"Fuck you! You dare raise your hands on me again, I told you, John. I told you, never to do that and you did!" Martha hissed. "You slapped me, grabbed me and threatened me."
John thought back to when he tossed Martha out of his room that day. He never thought she would turn on him and do something as reckless as this. But he didn’t believe her. Francis wasn't a traitor.

"You're angry, you're getting back at me -" John grit through his teeth. "You're a liar"

Martha rubbed at her stomach and she steps forward to John. "And you're sick with rage, you thought Francis was the only one who had eyes for you." She smirked as he spoke and John's nasty scowl deepened. "He's been fucking me senseless before you, he wants me, he loves me. Why do you think I never dated anyone? Went to parties? Not because of father. Because Francis is my boyfriend -"

Bullshit.
John snaps, he clenches his fist and he's ready to chin her. "Liar"

He couldn't stomach this.

"You're his toy, the one he wants is me and now that I'm having his baby, it's me he'll choose." Martha says, carelessly. She's looking down at her stomach here peaking out of her school blouse. John watches her rubbing it, hating it, he hated the sight of her and her baby.

John loathed her.
He wished this wasn't happening right now.

John wished it didn't exist and her.
He wished he didn't have a sister.

John wished she was -
"You're deluded" John spat. "You fucking whore"

Martha bounced her gaze back up to him. Her big brown eyes baring through him and she narrowed them.

"You're dead to me"

It was cold, so cold the way he said it.

And he meant it too.

Martha knew that he did.

"And once father knows who your brat belongs to, he'll have both of you put away and your fucking kid."

Something must've done it for Martha. John had definitely hit a nerve because Martha in seconds, she lost her cool facade. That cockiness she held was long gone and she turned murderous.

She charged at John and went for his hair. John howled in pain as she yanked fistfuls of his long curls. Tugging John's head down as she grit her fingers right into his scalp and was shaking John. Trying to rip out his hair.

"I'll kill you! You fucking freak! You're not taking away my baby!" She screamed.

John went to tug at her hair too, he's got the ends of her hair while she had his by the scalp. They're yanking on each others curls, tussling around and shouting the odds at one another. Both trying to rip out each others scalp, the ruckus they made was enough to shake up the entire house. Thumping of footsteps, screaming and clawing at each other.

They neared closer and closer towards the edge of the stairwell from out the hallway. John shoved her away from him, enraged and ready to kill.

"Get off me you psychotic bitch!" He shouts.
Martha pounced right back at him with her nails out and John dodged her. Then John had Martha by the wrists, trying to keep her at arms length away from him and they're going closer to the bannister of the top floor. It was high up, third story and the chandelier dangled just below, hovering above the ground foyer.

Sharp, spiked with its lights.

Waiting.

However Martha broke out of John's grasp, she had some strength and it surprised John. She goes to take John's hair again and as she did with John yelping, John angrily, tearfully, he's pounded a punch right into her belly. It knocked the life out of her and she staggered back away from John.

He hated her with all his being.

Her and her kid.

Because of them he had lost Francis.

His sister, she had lost herself or perhaps, John never knew her at all.

All them times he had cried over a nameless boy to her in his room. Martha comforting John, knowing all along it was John Francis had been fucking on the side. All while fucking her and telling her he loved her. Oh, John could not bare it.

His heart was wounded, aching, breaking.

All at once and he couldn't breathe.

It was then when Martha growls, she's a mad woman, her eyes wild and she's run to John, scratching up his face. "I hate you!" She roared.

"I hate you too!" John screamed. "Go to hell!"

And it was when John was the one backing up because of Martha shoving him up into the banister. John looked over his shoulder, heart stopping, terrified and he sees that he's almost going over. He's about to.

He's going to die.

His sister is going to finish him.

He will never see Francis again.

"You'll go first!" Martha shouts.

John is met with Martha trying to shove him over it. He's pushing her away from him and luckily, John skips around her, fooling her and Martha is looking for where John went. She spots him, John's stomach drops and she's is grabbing his hair again.

Yanks John's head back enough to give him whiplash, he's slapping her right across the face, she winces and he's ready to sport his own hell out on her.

As Martha yanked on his hair, John had hers and they were budging both over to the banister.

"He doesn't want you!" Martha screamed.
"Yes he does!" John shouts back, at the top of his lungs. "Get off me you bitch!"

But as they near over to the railing, Martha and John halt when they hear the voice of their mother.

"Martha! John!" She called.

It must have caught Martha off guard.

She was startled and John's eyes were saucers when he saw his sister go over in the corner of his eye.

It happened in seconds.

Martha slipped and toppled over.

She went through the chandelier.

Crashing through like a sledgehammer to a brick wall.

Their mother ran over to John's side, John had his hands clutched to the banister as he watched in a daze.

She was out like a light.

John and his mother watched as she fell both frozen like statues.

It was like time had stopped.

Martha's body hit the ground floor like an egg cracking in a pan.

Like a flame, she was gone.

Alex remained unmoving.

He couldn't speak.

John took Alex's hand and another tear rolled down his cheek. "That's what happened" He said softly. "She turned on me, we fought and my mother must have just startled her. It was an accident."
More silence.

John clasped Alex's hand tighter. "Please say something, Alex. Please."

Eventually Alex found his voice, it was sore, croaky, little.

He met John's eyes for what felt like in forever.

"Your own mother" Alex murmured. "You're both in this, together."

John tilts his head, his eyes narrowing and another tear came down.

"It wasn't deliberate, Alex. I swear it." John murmured. "It was an accident, she just - tripped"

Alex's shoulders drooped.

This story was one of the worst he had ever heard.

"There was nothing either me or her could do, she staggered over the top floor banister and she went over. Alex."

Alex felt like crying himself and to his surprise tears did built up.

It was too much.

"You know, I believe, one of us had to go. One of us had to die." John let out, quietly. "The baby, we never saw it again. After Martha fell, Father rang an ambulance and the baby survived. Mother played it off, said it was a suicide. She said Martha hadn't been happy for some time, said the pregnancy was making her worse. The baby was taken away. I told my mother everything. Mother - she believed me over her. That traitorous bitch"

Alex cut his eyes at John.

How could they all even lie about Martha's death like that.

It was so dishonourable.

So disrespectful.

Alex couldn't even fathom what went through the minds of this family. They were all deranged as each other. The whole lot of them except the younger siblings.

"Mother said she couldn't raise Martha's baby, not with Mary needing so much care and visiting often too"

But Alex didn't want to hear anymore about that.

A tear came down Alex's own cheek. John's eyes widened at the sight of it and he went to wipe it away. Alex stopped him. "No John -"

"I just want to -"

This time Alex stood up.

He slaps John's hand off him and John looked like he had been scalded. Helpless as ever.

"No, you lied about being raped and so, even though, you were both fucking this dirtbag, knowing
"it was wrong! Your mother went along with it too!" Alex spurted out in rage, shock, confusion. "Lied about her own daughter -"

"It was an accident" John hissed, baring daggers at Alex as he did.

"You both lied!"

"She was trying to push me over that fucking banister first!" John cried. "Martha was trying to throw me off it! Trying to kill me -"

Alex scoffed at him. "Maybe she should have"

"Why... why would you say that!" John gasps. "Alexander!"

"John" Alex shook his head in disbelief. "This whole... thing with Martha, you, some baby, your mother. Francis. I can't."

Now John was getting up, panicked and he's got his arms out to Alex.

Alex tried to walk away, it was freezing now with the winds picking up, he was hungry and tired. But John he grabs Alex's wrist and he's tugging him back.

"Alexander, please. Look, everything can go back to normal. You wanted to know, right?" John babbled desperately. "Baby, no. No. Please."

Alex cringed at the pet name.

"Get away from me" Alex muttered, he couldn't even look at John. "Just stay away"

"Alexander"

Alex raised a finger up at John, he looked anywhere but at him.

He couldn't.

"Stay away"

John tried to reach out one last time, he's sobbing, "Alex, no, no -"
"Stay the fuck away!"

John's mouth was left agape, his shoulders slumped and he watched Alex walk from him. He knew they were officially done. And with that. Alex went inside the house, leaving John sat out there. Looking up at the stars, his hand on his stomach and a heavy conscious, alone in the night.
WERE GETTING CLOSER TO THE END GUYS
THANK YOU FOR ALL THE KUDOS
I LOVE YOU ALL AND SUPPORT Y'ALL SO SO MUCHHHH
<3
Chapter Summary

The beginning of an end... how will it play out? Keep reading.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning Alex sat alone at the kitchen table. He was tapping his pen against his glass of mango juice, staring down hard at his notebook and heaved a little sigh to himself.

He didn't feel like coffee today. Coffee would make him more jittery than he already was and Alex felt like he was on the brink of it all.

Still, it was annoying without his laptop. Writing by hand was slower and he missed with his beloved laptop. He could get it fixed once he got back to New York, still, it wasn't the point. John wrecked it.

John had ruined it.
He ruined everything.

Alex was just glad it was Saturday and his flight back home was the day after. Finally, he would be going back home. Away from this hell hole.

He decided to take a small break from writing, his hand was started to cramp up and Alex leaned back there in the chair. He's grabbing his phone, getting up the text between him and Lafayette. Alex had been so guarded of his phone since John found out about the password change. He didn't feel safe anymore to even use his phone and wondered if John was finding a way to see his messages.

It scared him not far short to death.

Lafayette must still be asleep Alex figured.
It was only ten minutes past eight in the morning. Alex could've had a lie in since it was the weekend, but he could hardly sleep.

Not with what he was told last night about Martha Laurens. The truth swirled around his head all night long. How she had fallen to her death in the very same house he was staying in. Falling through a chandelier with her unborn child, her own brother and mother lying about her death made it worse.

But what a horrible way to die.

Alex felt sick from the thought.

The tapping of his pen stopped in his other and and Alex pursed his lips. "Death doesn't discriminate..." He whispered to only himself. "Takes and it takes... and it takes."

His mother was the last person in his thoughts and Alex put his pen down completely.

Alex ended up drowning his sorrows in another long, emotional, lengthy text to Lafayette. The only person he felt he could talk to about John. He had seen John for what he truly was, a monster.

After sending it, Alex huffs and he decides to just hold on, be patient. Lafayette would reply later.

It was ten minutes later just as Alex gained a fair bit of strength back in his hand and began writing again, when John emerged into the kitchen. Alex could hear his subtle footsteps patter down one of the spiralled staircases.

Alex braced himself.

It was the morning after another blow between them and Alex wondered what was about to go down this time.

Alex didn't acknowledge him when he came into the kitchen.

He ignored him and Alex could feel John's eyes on him as he came over.

At first John didn't say a thing, no 'good morning' or 'hey'. Nothing. Alex was glad but he knew John was cooking up a storm there in his silence. Alex looked up to see what John was doing and he watched him parade around the kitchen, John looked a state.

His once beautiful curly hair all mangled, he looked paler than the day before and his eyes looked sore from no sleep. Also it must be the third day in a row John had the same sweats, tshirt and hoody on. He never got dressed anymore.

Alex assumed this could only be John letting himself go so that he would say something, show he cared and John would hope Alex looked after him. Alex said nothing, John could dress himself.

But he had to be honest, John didn't look well. He looked sick.

Still he was moving around just fine, he seemed okay.

John was busy grabbing himself some juice, Alex's too, to boot and Alex heaved a small sigh when John came over to the table. Alex kept his eyes on his work, he heard the scraping of the chair pull out and John's presence take place infront of him.
Here they were.

Again.
Alex kept on writing, he couldn't stop now. As his fingers danced with the pen in his hand, Alex pocketed his phone too. John watched him do so, his expression never budging from its blank state. Alex didn't going on it.

Although a second or so later, John's brow crossed. Alex never saw it though.

It affected him, deep down, it did. Alex didn't trust him.

John takes a mouthful of mango juice before sitting back in his seat and he patters his fingers on the table.

Alex got annoyed with the sequence of tipper-tappering and wished to god, John would just spit out whatever garbage he had cooped up.

"I'm sorry about last night" John started, quietly.

Alex's gut tied in a horrid knot.

He didn't want reminding about Martha's death, it was already too gruesome alone. That's without forgetting about the rest of what John had told him.

John twists his mouth, he's staring at the table mindlessly as he taps.

Alex showed no sign of acknowledgement.

"I know, I've ruined everything. You don't want to hear what I have to say, I get it. I do and I've been thinking..." John told him, his expression weakened and John's tappering turned quicker. He was nervous. "I thought about it all night long and it's now or never"

Again, Alex continued on writing. He took a quick sip of his own drink before going back to his notepad. John glared at him this time, his stare was wild and desperation was getting the best of him.
"Don't you want to know?" John asks, shakily. "I'm... pouring my heart out here Alexander. I'm trying to let you in about me, my past, my life."

Alex was on the verge of getting up and walking out.

But then John got there before him, pressing on with, "Alex"

Finally Alex snaps and he places his eyes on John. Coldly.

"And I heard every word, I don't want you to let me in. I've heard enough about you and your family." Alex told him firmly.

He goes back to writing but stops when John adds, "Please"

Alex sighed, he looked at John once more and he crossed his arms there against the table.

"There is just one last thing, one last thing, I have to tell you." John says, he sounded worried, terrified even. He even looked shaken up. Alex frowned at this because John looked as if he were on the edge of having a nervous breakdown. "You deserve to know about it"

His hazel eyes were already glassy with coming tears. Alex stared back confusion on his face. Surely there wasn't anything else to talk about.

"John" Alex said slowly. "We're done talking -"

But John shook his head, he took a deep breath before exhaling and he drops his gaze for a long moment. As if he were recollecting himself and then looks back to Alex.

"No, there is something else, you really, really ought to know" John shakily said.

Alex furrowed his brow. "Like what? What more exactly can there be? My god -"

"It ties in with... infact, come with me upstairs, I'll just show you instead." John spat out quickly. "So... please"

From the way John's tone and entire mood changed right there infront of him. Alex didn't like this.
Not one bit.

His own stomach was wrapping in knots now.
"What is it?" Alex, sounding fairly on edge himself now. "John?"

John was already getting up, Alex watched as John staggered slightly as he did. John's adams apple was bobbing and John didn't even look at him.

This wasn't good.

"Come with me and see" John murmured.

Slowly Alex placed his pen down and he pulled out of his chair as he then began to stand up. He's watching John loose his cool, second by second.

Alex arched a brow at John.

He couldn't get John to look at him.

All John did next was gesture his head for Alex to follow him upstairs. As John went up first, Alex stood behind for a small moment. He swallowed thickly, worries were pelting up and in his heart Alex knew this was all going to fall apart. For some reason, it was as if, today was the day.

Reluctantly, Alex followed.

Once he was upstairs in John's room Alex could feel himself unable to settle.

Something was up.

"So?" Alex went.

He looked around and John's room looked the same as it always did. Although John really needed to clean, the curtains were shut letting near to go daylight in, dust particles fluttering in the air. John's desk space was a mess, papers everywhere, his stationary scattered all over, half the print outs and pictures from his pinboard above were taken down, ripped up.

Alex did notice John hadn't unpacked yet. His travel bag was still there, clothes hanging out of it on the chair in the corner. Alex wondered just what the hell had been going on in here. If John was planning on coming back with him, he was very well, sorrily mistaken.

As Alex was wandering around slowly, aimlessly, looking around John's room. Hands in his pockets, waiting for whatever it was John had planned. He went over to the tall window, kneeling
one leg just on the window seat and stared out. The morning sky looked bleak, dark and clouded. It looked as if it were due to rain soon. All the trees surrounding the land blew in their line, wafting, drifting.

He hoped that there wasn't a storm on the way. That was the last thing Alex needed since he was flying out tomorrow.

"Alex" John called softly behind him.

The mention of his name caused a twinge of dread to drop in Alex’s gut. The penny finally dropping and the side it landed on, it wasn't lucky.

Slowly Alex stood upright and he turns to John.

John is not close to him but not too far either. He's stood there looking disheveled as ever, dreadful, tired and fearful. That's when Alex noticed something was being hidden behind his back. Alex felt his throat go dry.

He knew whatever it was, it wasn't going to be good.

"John?" Alex said, the question lingering in his voice.

He darts his eyes up to John's.

"What is that?" Alex asks, warily. Very warily.

Alex is eyeing John and then his arms behind his back.

Fear was building up and the tension between them was murderous.

John's looking at John brokenly. His adam apple bobs up and down, in a pattern and Alex knows it's definitely bad if he's scared.

Infact, Alex had never seen John this terrified before.

Not even when John spoke about his father who he hated and abused him.

The grace was too powerful to name.

They were drowning in silence.

"John" Alex said again, his eyes fearful and his voice jittered. "What... what have you got there?"

John took in a deep breath, shakily he exhaled as he's staring Alex right in the eyes.

Finally, John speaks.

"Um, right, okay so - " John stammered.

Alex eyed him.

Waiting.

John was swaying on foot to foot, nerves getting the better of him. He drops his eyes from Alex's.

"If I show you... " John said quietly.
Alex's heart raced and raced.

"Alexander, if I show you. Don't run." John says, too quietly.

This time he looks back at Alex.

Alex stiffened.

Why?
What had John done?

"You have to promise me, please. Alex. Don't -" John took in another deep shaky breath. "Don't
freak out on me, please."

"What do you mean?" Alex asked, unease dripping into his voice by the second. "John, what the
fuck is happening?"

John was welling up. "You can't... oh god. Alex, please don't hate me."

"What've you done"? Alex asks, fear loomed and it was almost there.

Alex's heart raced and race.

"John?"

John did it.

He sniffled and slowly showed Alex exactly what he had been hiding. John moved his arms infront
to show Alex.

Alex felt his soul leave him.
At first he did a double take - it couldn't be

No.
It was.

His big brown eyes went wider, wider and wider at the sight of it.

This was one of them moments, one of them horrible moments when you were in so deep. It's just easier to swim down, only except Alex was already drowning. He couldn't swim. He was full on losing consciousness, screaming inwards.

"I got this from that spot you showed me" John murmured, he looked down at his feet. Clearly ashamed.

Alex's lips wobbled.

He then silently gasped and made some kind of a choking sound. The worst, awfulest heart wrenched sound he'd ever made.
NO.

NOOOOOOOOOOOO.
Alex was numb.

This was hell.
He was living in HELL.

John held it up and as he did, his expression goes from worried to full out despair. Alex was quaking, breaking in half and raging.

"Alex, no. No, don't make that face! Please, this is a good thing!" John tried to reason. He's got a hand up in defence and is stalling closer to Alex. But Alex backs away.

This was over the top. Never in a million years would Alex thought John would go this far to hurt him. This was unforgivable.

John was crying along with Alex now. "Don't be scared... Alex... It's okay!" John croaked. "Please, please say something"

It was the blanket him and Eliza buried. The same little baby blanket with the animals on it. It was here. John had dug it up.

It had even been washed and John unfolded it, holding it up.

John had dug up his child's grave.

"I - I - " Alex stammered.
NO.

Alex felt dizzy.

His head was spinning and his feel tingled. He felt like he was on the verge on a heart attack.

He was going to pass out.

No.
"It's -" John rambled. "This looks bad -" He's still holding a hand up to Alex as if this even justified the situation. "But there's a reason why I did this! I promise, it will be a good thing!"

Oh hell no.
Alex could never forgive him for this.

This was the end of them.

"I remembered you told me about the baby, Eliza miscarried and I know, you both buried it." John

Alex was shaking with silent sobs, holding a hand over his mouth and his face crumpled. John
looked devastated and it shocked Alex even more how John was surprised by his reaction. As if
churning up a dead baby was normal. Alex wanted to strangle the living life out of him.

But he couldn't.

He couldn't even move.

"I know how much it killed you, Alex. Truth is, I know that feeling. The very same loss. I know
how it feels, I know it and I know you, Alexander." John wept.

Alex squinted an eye at John. He had no idea what he was even talking about.

This wasn't happening to John.

He wasn't the one whose child had been dug up.

John placed the small blanket on the edge of his bed, he looked up at Alex finally, sadly and
placed the small blanket on the edge of the bed. John tried to walk over to Alex, but it wasn't
happening.

Alex ran to the other side of the room. Unable to speak. He was up against the wall by John's
wardrobe. Frightened, absolutely horrified.
John went there.

This was it.

The end.

John let out the most laughable and crude squeal of shock. His face hurt and Alex didn't get why. He wasn't allowed to feel any sort of pain or misery, John wasn't supposed to be hurting. He did not fucking deserve to be.

Alex squinted his eyes at John as he neared him. Hatefully burrowing his eyes through John's soul and John must've felt it.

"Don't run from me, Alex. It's me, it's Jack. Your boyfriend!" John said breaking down. "You don't have to be scared"
No.

How could he.

HOW COULD HE
"Look, the fetus is still buried, I put it back down to rest. I promise. I'd never hurt you or your child." John tells him, frantically. Alex is going dizzier and dizzier. "But I had to do this because I know your first, it meant a lot to you. I know that and I respect that -"

What a joke.

But the more John spoke, the weaker Alex felt.

He was slowly losing it.

"But you can be a father again!" John tells him, softly with a small nervous smile. "God, what I want to say is -" John took a deep breath before saying, "Alex, I was too scared to ever tell you, so fucking terrified. For months and months. I didn't know if you would accept me. I wanted to tell you ever since we got together. I just couldn't -"

"Shut up" Alex murmured.

Even whispering was draining, Alex held a hand up on his forehead and grimaced at the pounding in his head. His vision was spiralling and John's voice sounded like an echo.

Alex wasn't sure if he even was dying. Perhaps he was.

If so he was glad, he could be free of John and all this craziness.

Free of it all.

John neared him more and more.

"The way I was born, I was born with both -"
Wait.

Alex felt his gut churn, he wanted to throw up.
His mind was fogging up and so was his vision. Alex's palms were sweating, his heart rate was through the roof and everything was slowly turning black.

"Shut up" Alex repeated and he then threw his hands over his ears.

"No, you need to hear this because it's just, so, so important and it's going to affect the both of us -" Then as John became right up close to him. Alex felt John's touch on his shoulder and it sent Alex through the roof.

"Alex? Alex are you okay?" John asked, panic rising in his voice. "Shit - Alex -"

"Shut the fuck up" Alex muttered, he was swaying, his feet were going to jelly.
Shit.

No.
He couldn't die here.

He didn't want to be at the hands of John in his last final moment.

Not this monster.

"Alex, Alex! Fuck, oh god. Right, I'm going to -"

Alex felt John try to pry him upwards as he was losing his balance.
Everything was hazy now.

"Just shut up..." Alex whispered.

John was dragging him along.

"Stay with me" John told him firmly.

Alex couldn't breathe.

"Shut -"

The last thing to happen was his head span in circles and within seconds, everything went black.
Warmth was all Alex felt right now.
Softness, lightness and the smell of vanilla or something sweet. Alex couldn't quite pinpoint what it was. But it smelt nice.

There were lovely little motions skimming around his head too, they were relaxing, felt good. Alex didn't want them to stop.

Alex couldn't see a thing, everything was in darkness. But he felt content, happy, at ease. He didn't want this feeling to ever end and for a moment or so, Alex truly did believe he was dead. If this was death, so be it, he thought.

Death was nice.

Dying was easier than living.

Living caused too much pain.

Pain Alex no longer wanted to handle.

Everything would be better now.

Until -
"Alexander?"
A voice.

Alex couldn't really recall who's who it was and for a second, Alex wondered if it was his lovely mother. He hadn't seen her for some time. It would be nice to see her again, Alex hoped he could.

"Alex?"

Alex felt himself shifting but he still didn't see a thing. Maybe this is what death was like, being able to move but never see anything.

Sometimes it was better that way.

Seeing things only caused pain, after all.

"Alex?" The voice said again.
But this time it was different because the darkness faded and in view, very blearily, light seemed through. Distorted figured came into play and Alex heard the tweeting of what sounded like birds. He assumed he was properly in heaven this time.

As Alex shifted on to what he felt like was his back, Alex let out a long hum and a groan. A yawn too.

He's gaining his vision back and his mind felt slightly clearer, still muggy though.

The feeling of soothing was still there on his scalp but it soon shifted to his cheeks. Alex blinked a few times, he's looking around properly and his stomach flipped.

He was alive.

Dread filled him once again.

Alex just couldn't seem to die.
"Ah, you're awake. Oh, Alex. God, I was worried. You scared me."

That meant.

Slowly, stiffly, Alex looked upwards and he lets eyes on what's worse than the grim reaper himself.

It's John.

Alex looked back around, he's lay on his back, resting his head on John's lap between his legs. They're tucked up in bed. Still in John's room.

But Alex sees no sign of the baby blanket, he assumed John moved it incase it caused him to faint again. A candle was being burnt on the far cabinet. It smelled good.

Alex felt truly terrible his whole body felt like lead, he was tired, drained, absolutely exhausted.

John sat upwards against the headboard playing with Alex's scruff and watched him drearily. He lunged forwards and cradled Alex around the head. Alex froze, he let John hug him gently and as John pulled away, sitting back upwards. He said, "You really scared me, I thought -" John stopped, he composed himself and breathed out a hefty breath. "Jesus, Alex. I thought I lost you then"

The irony.
John had already lost him.

Alex pulled a face at his words.

Then John runs a hand through his loose messy locks. "It's okay" John tells him, sweetly. "You fainted, I changed you, put a cool cloth your head to bring your temperature down and you're here. Sh, sh. You're here with me, you'll be fine."

He leans down planting a kiss on the side of Alex's head. Alex then realised he's resting his head on John's lap.

"Do you remember what happened?" John asks him.

Alex stared into space.

He didn't want to talk to him.

John gets it.

"I know, what I did and what I showed you, it must've shocked you - well, clearly. It did." John told him. "But there is a reason, I had to do it."

There wasn't a reason.

John was just spiteful.

Alex didn't know what to do.

He wanted to run for the hills, scream, murder John. All of these things, but, he couldn't though.

John then adds, "I'll make us some drinks in a moment, okay. For now, lets just rest."

No.

Alex didn't want to stay in this bed a second longer with this creep.

Fuck this.

Alex is then trying to sit up, he's stumbling as he did and John is watching in alarm.

"No, no, Alex, you're too weak - " John says and he's trying to keep Alex down. "Wait"

He didn't listen.

Alex hoist himself upwards and it took the life out of him. His back cracked and he's feeling awful, great, but mostly awful.

"Fuck" Alex gasped as he's sitting up, he's pulled a nerve in his shoulder.

"Alex, hey" John tells him. "Not too fast, you don't have to get up though. Lie back down, I'll look after you."

No chance.

"I have to go" Alex said.

He's getting the fuck out of here, today.
John's eyes go wide. He's frowning and tugging on Alex's sleeve. "No, Alex. You'll hurt yourself running around, you're in no fit state!"

"Piss off" Alex snaps.

John looked taken aback, offended, hurt. "Alex..." John tugs on him harder but Alex slaps his hand off.

"No, wait, we can talk about this -" John shakes it off before grabbing him again and Alex is making a 'tsk', he's sliding off the sheets and shuffling off the bed. John moves with him as he's getting up. "Alexander! Fucking just listen to me!"

Alex finds the strength to give John a shove. Although John wobbled backwards, he didn't fall and he's scowling at Alex for doing that.

"I'll sleep on the airport toilet fucking floor if I have to" Alex says, nastily. "I ain't staying here"

John scoffed at him, as if he wasn't serious. The thing is, Alex was. He would do that, just to be away from John.

"You can't go! No, Alex!" John stresses. "You didn't hear what I had to say earlier!"

Alex looked at John like he was insane. Which he was.

"No! Fuck what you have to say! I don't care, I don't want to know!" Alex growled and he's getting up on his feet.

Alex swayed as he began to walk. John watched him, carefully, waiting for Alex to fall just incase. John moved his arms around Alex for support as he got up behind him. "Alex... please" John pleaded. "I really need you to know because it ties in with why I did what I did!"

Alex was slowly gaining balance, his body felt horrible. He didn't know how he was going to do this with John hounding him to stay. Alex looked down, he was topless, only in his sweatpants still and socks. He needed to get dressed.

"John, I'm not listening. Fuck off." Alex told him, plainly.

Looking around Alex spots his top and bounds over quickly to grab it. John followed.

"Seriously, you're doing this to me" John muttered under his breath.

Alex didn't listen to him. He's too busy slipping on his top.

John's brow furrowed. "You don't want to know?"

"I'm not staying a second longer" Alex croaked. "I can't, I should never have come back here. Fuck this."

Alex began to storm over to the door.

"What?!" John fled after him and he's pulling Alex right back.

Alex staggered as this happened. He's cutting his eyes at John and John's begging him in the face.

"Don't do this!" John grasped. "No, no!"
"I mean - I can't. I just can't stay! You, you're fucking crazy." Alex babbled on. John looked crushed. "You need help - but even then, a string of therapists would never be able to help you. John. You're insane!"

"I'm not insane" John murmured, he even sounded unsure himself. "Don't say that!"

"You are!"

"I'm not!"

Alex started to walk off again but John gripped his upper arm this time and clenched his nails right into Alex's skin. Alex looked at John with eyes wide as planets.

"You're leaving me?" John wept.

Alex narrowed his eyes at him and grit out, "You weaselled your way into my child's grave? You robbed it! How in the fuck can I ever even... I can't forgive you. I never will and I'm leaving. I have to." Alex stammered as he's turning his head away.

"No, no, no! You can't!" John was screaming all sorts at him. "You can't, not right now! Not with - no! Alex! You haven't heard what I need to tell you!"

"Fuck off, get the hell away from me!"

Alex pulled himself out of John's grasp, when he did, John's nails in him slid and Alex winced at the horrid scrape. He started to walk off but John bounced infront of him and he's grasping him by the wrist this time.

"Get back here"

Alex dodged John and tugged himself out of his grip.

"You're fucking crazy!" Alex shouted.

"I'm not!" John babbled. "You think I'm telling lies?! About this! I would never lie about this, not this! Look, Alex come here. Come and feel my -"

"No!"

Alex had to keep moving.

Keep going.

Leave.

Get away.

"Just give me your hand" John pleaded. "Please!"

"You're vile" Alex spat. " - fucking freak!"

That must have been John's breaking point.

Because before Alex knew it, John was storming after him and taking him by the wrist again. His grasp was like iron this time and Alex's heart stopped. He didn't know what would happen this time.
The door was so close, yet so far.

"I am not a freak!" John cried aloud.

John has his wrist and forces Alex's hand on to his stomach.

"Just feel! Feel me!" John cried. "Feel my belly! Just put your hand here!"

Alex went still.
His eyes were planted on John's stomach where his hand was, then Alex's eyes met John's teary ones, they went wide and Alex frowned.

No.

That wasn't possible.
"No" He murmured

John nodded though, he tried to smile but it failed. "Yes"

Alex's breathing was all over the place and he felt dizzy again. His mind foggy, he felt terrible again.

John guided them over to the bed slowly. His small smile remained and he's still staring into Alex's eyes.

"No" He said again and Alex is toppling over on the edge of the bed. His legs felt like rubber and his body was numb.

There was no way.

But John only sighed another, "Yes"

As he did, John sits down slowly beside him, he keeps Alex's hand on his stomach.

"I'm seven weeks"

Alex had only thought John had gained a bit of weight on his stomach. But he hadn't really noticed, Alex had barely touched John since their relationship was burning out. Then it hit Alex all of a sudden.
Now it made sense.
John constantly looking ill, the comfort clothing, the drastic mood swings, change in John's personality, the reason why John never drank coffee anymore, ate too much, the sickness, the fatigue and loss of exercise. This was why John hadn't been himself recently, for weeks.

Weeks.

This had been going on weeks and Alex didn't even realise.

Alex's mind was blank.

John stared into his eyes intensely.

"You see" John croaked. "I'm telling the truth"
No.

"How the -" Alex paused and he's looking into space.
No, no, oh god. No.
John had trapped him.

So this was why he had been so jolly lately.

He had a reason to hold Alex down.

But this didn't explain how on earth John could be -

"I wanted to tell you, I really did. I was just too scared." John sniffled. "I didn't know how you would react, how you'd take it and if you'd even accept me. Not many people can accept people like me. My own family struggled, my father didn't even know what I was. My mother, she doesn't look at me the same way she did at Martha, Henry, James or Mary."

Alex watched John unwind his sorrow with a picture of horror.

"I was different" John murmured.

Alex nodded.

Now this explained it all.

The bullying, John's awful upbringing, the abuse.

Alex still just couldn't comprehend how this was even all possible.

"Hermaphrodite" John snarled bitterly, his brow crossed at the word. He said it like it was venom. "That's what people still call us, as if we're some kind of circus freak. We're not, we're human, we're normal and that's okay."

John shook his head, welling up again. "We're not freaks, I'm not a freak."

He took a deep breath before looking back to Alex, his eyes big and worried. "I'm intersexual"

Alex looked puzzled.

John took his expression for a chance to explain.

"On the outside, I look like a boy. But on the inside, I'm female. Well, really, I'm both. But, I feel like a boy more than I do a girl." John softly said. "Even though, I'm more female genetically. I like to identify as male though, it just feels right."

Alex remained stiff. It was hard for Alex to take in and difficult for John to tell. But John knew he had to tell him, his stomach was only going to grow bigger and questions would only arise when Alex would notice it was a bit different than weight gain.

"I like to embrace both sides though" John tells Alex, his voice stiff. Alex watched him, eyes blank. "I may as well, right?"

Alex wouldn't know.

He gave no answer to that.

Slowly, Alex turned his head and stared down at his socked feet.
He didn't know how to even feel about this.

"My father and mother wanted to raise me as a boy, it's what I looked more of -" John spoke. "But as I was growing up, I was more feminine in ways than my brothers, my father hated it. He treated Henry and James better than me, even though, I'm a boy too."

Alex was still listening, his heart bled for John in one way, but he couldn't forgive him still. No. Just no.

John gave himself a minute to just breathe before continuing. He squeezed Alex's hand as he did. Alex glanced to look at him. John looked wrecked.

"At school, I got shit for the way I was. My behaviour, my voice, my hair, everything. I could never win and I paid the price for it -" John wept. "I grew up, so, angry. I hated myself, so I resorted to cutting. Francis, he knew about me being intersexual. He accepted it and that was enough for me."

Alex closed his eyes at the mention of that creep.

"There was hope -" John smiled, tears dropping but the smile turned ugly. "Until Martha..."

Alex watched him with pity.

"She called me a freak once" John said, sadly. "The one person, I loved, I trusted, it cut me so hard, worse than I ever did to myself -"

John wiped a running tear from his cheek. "I knew what she meant, 'Jacky, you're different, you're not like us, you're not good enough' it meant that."

Alex felt himself want to cry too.

"As if - As if I didn't hate myself already!" John sobbed.

And he sobbed again.

Alex didn't comfort him once.

He let John cry it out.

Alex moved his gaze to the floor again.

"After she died, I rebelled, I didn't care if my parents hated me anymore. I didn't care about anything. I was a danger -" John murmured. "So, my mother, she took away the internet, had my brothers move away to college, got rid of all the staff. She isolated me completely. I was just spiralling into nothingness, I wanted to die and I told her this -"

Alex's stomach clenched.

He wanted John dead and Alive.

"After a year or two, she decided enough was enough. She wanted someone to be there for me, make me feel like life was worth living again she said -" John croaked out. Alex then shifted his eyes and they met with John's.
"And then, I met you."
And John gave him the saddest smile ever.

"You made me want to live again" John told him.

Alex didn't know what to say.
He was speechless.

"I dug up the blanket because I wanted to tell you... it's okay to live again, to find something again, try again." John said. Alex's brow knit at this.

No.

This still didn't justify what he had done.

John puts another hand over Alex's there on his stomach, so that it was being clasped with both his hands. He squeezed it.

Alex narrowed his eyes again at John.

He was still a sick fuck.

"You're going to be a father, again." John says, his smile and eyes lit up.

And then John looks down at his stomach.

"I know, I've hid it from you and I didn't want to" John admitted, he looked pained in the eyes when he looked back up.

Not that Alex saw, he couldn't even look at John let alone in the face. "I felt like I couldn't be me, properly and I freaked out when you met Sam that time. He knows about what I am, we used to be friends with benefits for a short while and I didn't want you finding out. I didn't want -"

John hiccuped another shaky breath. Alex closed his eyes, brow furrowing.

"I didn't want to loose you"

Alex needed to know and telling him this, John felt like he could breathe.

Finally.

"When we met, Alexander, I knew we had something and I couldn't loose that, I couldn't."

If only John had just told Alex from the start. Alex wouldn't have minded, he wouldn't have. But to be deceived in this type of way was the lowest of the low.

John brushed his thumb over the shell of Alex's hand there as it remained on his stomach.

"I've struggled with this, all my life. It's kind of the reason why... I'm so fucked up. It caused so many problems." John confessed, brokenly. "I was born like this and I can't help it"

Alex was blown away.

He needed air, lots of it.

"I just hope you understand" John says, sullenly.

Alex remained stunned.

But when Alex gave no answer, things went from sweet to sour.

John frowned at him.
"God, I wish you would just say something!" John snapped. He shoves Alex in the shoulder. "Say something! Speak to me!"

"I don't have anything to say" Alex responded, quietly. Hurt.

John glared at him and Alex did back.

"What? You have nothing to say about your unborn child?" John hissed.

Alex shook his head.

"You are unbelievable!" John boomed. "I'm carrying your child, Alexander. Your own flesh and blood. Our flesh and blood. Our baby. I thought maybe, you would at least show some sign of delight. Something, anything!"

Alex shrugged, lifelessly.

"I can't believe you" John hiccuped another sob as he spoke. He shoved Alex again, this time it hurt Alex and he whined from it. "Every single day, your baby is growing bigger and bigger inside of me. I've had to keep that a secret for fucking weeks and I didn't want to. I was so happy when I found out...

How did John even know?

Alex had many questions regarding John's reproductive system. Many.

But he couldn't get the words out to even ask.

John wiped one of his eyes. "I thought this was going to be a new start for us, I thought you'd be thrilled, happy because you could be a father. again. Finally. And it was me, I'm the one, giving you a little boy or girl."

Jesus Christ.

"Imagine, just how gorgeous our child will be. Your big brown eyes, a fraction of your smile, your laugh, my curls and dimples -" John rambled. "He or she will have your wit, a fragment of that amazing mind! The world will have to look out because of that alone!"

Alex grimaced at that.

He didn't want John's baby.

"Can't you just be happy?" John rasped.
Happiness.

What even was that anymore? Alex didn't know.

He shrugs once more at John and turns away his head. Sighing.
"Isn't that enough?" John asks, desperately. He shoves Alex again and again. The next time harder and Alex remained unmoving. "Why isn't that enough?!"

Alex shrugged again.

John remained glaring at him, undefeated and grouchily, he huffs, "But still, whether you like it or not. It's done. Alexander, we're having a baby."

They were having a child.

This was really happening.

"And I really, really need you." John told Alex, tearfully, almost as if here were begging. "I need you around... that's why I don't want you to go."

Him and her.

"I'm due for a scan soon and I want you with me, please, Alex." John tells him, holding his stomach. "Come with me"

Him and him.

Him and John.

Alex didn't know.

John smiled at Alex, excitement in it as he did. "I promised you, didn't it? You would be a father again. See."

Alex shook his head in disbelief.

No.

Not like this.

Not to John.

"When -" Alex started up.

John's ears perked at this because finally, Alex was speaking.

"What?" John asks, quickly. "What is it? Alex, I'll tell you everything, everything and anything about me."

"When did you take a test?" Alex asks.

John gave a small hum before saying, "Well, I bought it at the airport before we left New York. You went to the bathroom, you never saw -" Alex narrowed his eyes at this, This was just how sneaky John truly was. "So, uh, a few weeks after we came back... I didn't feel well. But I just kind of, knew."

Alex did not want a child to John.

"How did... how... where even did I -" Alex stammered.

His throat felt like it was tightening by the second.
John knew what he was trying to ask though.

John shifted their hands along side his stomach, swirled it around. Alex's blood ran even colder. His unborn child, with a man, woman, person. Whatever, that he hated. No, this could not be happening. This wasn't real.

"Well, you know that slit just along my testicles -"

Oh god.

Now Alex remembered.
He hadn't payed much attention though, in the heat of the moment it all just happened. John getting on top of him, tricking him, sliding into him in a whole different way and Alex hadn't even known about it.

Alex had never even saw the position that John lowered himself on. John had busied himself, Alex with his eyes shut and John distracted him.

"You did this on purpose" Alex hissed, rounding at John. John immediately shut up and he looked hurt. "A 'few weeks' you said! So that means... Back then... You got on top, Christmas Eve -"

"I've been on you once or twice since then -" John cut in.

Alex scoffed at John.

"Shut up! It's not the point! Now it all adds the fuck up. Even the dates, the weeks, adding it all up! I get it, you did this on purpose!"

John dropped his gaze.

"You know what, John. I would never have cared if you're half boy or girl. Whatever the fuck you are!" Alex snapped.

John gasped, he was beyond offended right now. Alex didn't care, he knew it was wrong to be this ignorant, but John had hurt him more than he could bare.

Fuck him.

" - Put aside all the other crazy shit you've done, this, oh, this tops it off. A fucking baby!" Alex said in disbelief. John glared at him. "A baby!"

"Fuck, fuck. Oh my god" Alex muttered to himself, he tried ripping his hand from John's stomach but John kept it in place. "This is so wrong"

Now it was John's turn to look hellish. "Our baby is not wrong" He snapped. "It's pure, it's beautiful, this is a good thing. An amazing, beautiful thing for us both. To bring us together."

"No" Alex rasped. "This is not a good thing! This is the threshold of hell! This is you! You trying to control me! Except this time you've brought someone else into the mix!"

"No it is not!" John shouted at him. "I want this baby! I wanted the last baby I had!"
Alex's eyes were like planets. John sees the way they widen and he knows Alex is questioning him.

"I was pregnant to Francis too" John admitted.

Alex's stomach crushed together.

A part of him was spawning where that creep, that predator had planted himself into. There in John's apparent womb.

Alex felt sick.

He was in a nightmare. He had to be.

Alex wanted to wake up.

Wake up from this.

"I lost it when my dad beat me, he found out. Told me it wasn't natural." John rasped, brokenly, crying. "My child wasn't unnatural and nor is this one!"

No more.
"Do you just... do this on purpose?!" Alex stammered, disgust in his voice. "Jesus christ! You give it out, don't you!"

John's mouth dropped.

John swatted Alex on his thigh. "You saying I'm easy?! No I do not give it out!" John snapped.

Alex rolls his eyes.

"My child to Francis, that was an accident! But not this, no. I want your baby, Alex. I knew, things weren't good between us and I thought..." John trailed off. "At least I would always have something of you."

"No" Alex gasped.

Now it made sense. Christmas Eve.

"I wanted to get pregnant" John mumbled.

"I knew I was able to, I wanted to tell you, I want to be with you, I want a family, a better life, I want to move to New York, to be with you, have some kind of happiness. That's all I want -" John told him. "I may be twenty-two years old, Alexander. But I know what I want! That's the life I want!"

"And yet that isn't any of what I want!" Alex rebuffed, huffing, his big brown eyes wild. John looked at him confused. "I don't want that, not with you."

John's bottom lip trembled. He looked defeated but wrath still shone there in those eyes of his.

"Why?"

Alex threw his hands up and groaned.

"I don't understand" John murmured. "Isn't this what you... with Eliza... but... Alex we have a baby on the way."

"Then get rid of it!" Alex hissed.
He didn't want it.

He didn't.

He knew he was being cruel, but Alex did not want this.

None of this.
"No, Alex, no!" John shouted, crying and banging a hand down on the side of the bed. "No! I'm not having an abortion!"

"Yes you are!"

"No I'm not!" John crooned.

Then Alex is moving to get up.

"I can't have a kid with you, not you." Alex muttered, his head was fogged up, badly. "This is one big mother fucking mistake!"

"No it isn't!"

"It is, you fucking psychopath!" Alex screamed.

John look hellish at that remark, but it didn't stop him from giving it Alex right back.

"It's meant to be! Why can't you see that!" John screamed back, his hands out, pleading to Alex.
It wasn't.

He's making a break for it.

Alex is standing up and he's going to the door once again.

John as usual, he's after him, like a wolf on a deer's trail.

Just as Alex gets to the door he's stopped by John's hand on his arm. His nails dug in and Alex is trying to fight him off.

"John, get off. Fucking get the hell off of me! I'm done, with you, we're done. It's over!"

They were.

It's over.

But John paid no mind to his words.
He was like a rabid animal, his hands all over Alex, pulling him backwards from leaving out the door.

"You can't! Alex I'm having your -"

"I don't want to know!"

"You're an orphan yourself!" John spat. "You know how it feels to be fucking abandoned! So why do it to your child? To us!"

Oh, he did not.
Alex glanced over his shoulder at him with a murderous look.

John did not look one bit bothered by it. He's too hysterical to even care.

"How could you leave your own child like this?!" John howled. "How?! Tell me how! You know how it feels!"

Alex couldn't listen to this.

"It's over, John. We're done!" Alex hurled.

He has to get out of this house. Away from John, far away.

"No, we're not!" John spat.

"We are! Now move!"

"You're not leaving me" John glowered.
"You are not leaving me!"

John lunges fast and he's grabbing Alex by the sides of his face. Staring him dead in the eye, Alex saw it right there and John wasn't playing around.
He meant blood.
"You're going nowhere" John told him, quietly, eerily.

Possessively clasping him tighter by the cheeks.

Alex shakily breathed out a small breath as he's staring back into John's eyes.

"Don't do this" John tells him softly, another tear came out rolling down his cheek. "We can be happy, we can."

No, they could never be happy.

Alex didn't know how many times he had to spell it out.

"I don't want you" Alex tells him. "John, I do not, want you"
John's eyes squint that extra bit.

Finally, Alex was going to experience just how bad John Lauren's wrath could truly be.

There's a storm coming.

Alex pushes him away lightly and he's heading to the door once more.

Just as Alex back turned, John's face darkened and he's lost it.

John was in rage.

He grabs a pair of scissors from his desk space and lunges towards Alex.

In the corner of Alex's eye, he sees John heaving over to him and Alex is in immediate alarm.

Quickly, swiftly, Alex dodges him and John is flying past him, almost tipping over his bed. Alex is running for the door, he had to get out.
But John is quick, pregnant, but faster. Alex was still tired with fatigue from it all.

He flies over to Alex and hurls the scissors towards Alex, but it meets the door frame. Brown wood chipping flies off as this happens, John growled when the scissors were lodged into the frame and Alex is trying to pry the door open.

But John slams his hand on it.

"You're not leaving!" John screamed in his face.

He grabs Alex by the scruff of his top and is dragging him. This time it didn't work though.

Alex struggled out of John's grasp, he pushes John away, Alex didn't mean to, but he shoves John by his stomach.

It shocked them both, Alex realising what he had done and John's eyes were scared, wide, betrayed how Alex would attempt to harm their own unborn child like that.

John ended up staggering backwards. He's then groaning out all sorts of heinous obscenities.

"Alexander!" He boomed at the top of his lungs, his scream echoing the entire house almost.
Alex was running for his life.

Chapter End Notes

OH FUQQQQQQQQQ
WELL...
NOW Y’ALL KNOW...

End Notes
Okay so some of you may know that I am working on the other story "Yes, You Are Enough" but I have been wanting to try something new. I'm going down a whole new path with Alex and John. It's horror/angsty so please keep that in mind!

As always my chapters are ridiculously long. This is just the first part of the story - it isn't that exciting, but more is to happen yet!

Thank you for reading. Kudos and comments are always appreciated <3 x

PS. The mansion I'm describing the Laurens's to have is like the PS4 game "Remothered" < google it - the game is cray

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!