You've Yet To Have Your Finest Hour
by cherrylng

Summary

Freddie Mercury finds the Afterlife a peaceful realm, but misses his previous life and his friends and family. When given the offer to return to the living world, Freddie does not hesitate to accept it. The godly beings have warned him with the difference of how time flows in their world, many years have passed in the living world, but they did not exactly say how many years have passed on Earth. All he has to go with is that all of his bandmates are still alive.

And that is good enough as it is for Freddie to return to the living world for the chance to live a new life once more.

Notes

It's my first time in writing a Queen fic. I got inspired ever since I watched Bohemian Rhapsody for the first time (seen it 2 times now). Comments and critiques be welcomed!
Chapter 1

The world that is the afterlife for the one once known as Freddie Mercury is not what he had expected when he had first arrived.

It is endless and vast. It has deserts. It has forests. It has tundra. It has seas and lakes. It has plains. It has mountains and hills. It has large rocks that seem to look like buildings over the distance. In each region, it has many oases dotted around here and there. The stars in the night skies are different than the ones that he is familiar with.

He had explored a lot of parts of this new world, without having gotten tired or thirsty or hungry from the journey. There’s food and water and Freddie can sleep, but it is more out of habit than a survival necessity. But in his time spent here, rarely does he meet another human soul. It takes what feels like forever to meet another soul here.

Most of the inhabitants that he had met so far are… were not human prior to their arrival of this afterlife. The few humans that he did met are either strangers to him, or humans who have long since forgotten who they once were and are forever wandering to somewhere, with no rhyme nor reason of why they are going to any direction. Worries of becoming the latter is what keeps Freddie on his toes, making sure that he remembers and knows who he is.

This place is not Heaven or Hell or even Purgatory. There are no punishments or rewards. You are merely here. To Freddie, calling this world the Afterlife is an apt name.

But Freddie Mercury is not alone in a small oasis that he had founded close to the seaside during his wanderings and decided to reside in as his home.

For one, he is often surrounded by cats.

How he knew that these little souls were once cats is based on how they move and react towards him. It is how the little wisp like creatures entangle themselves around his legs and jump up to the trees. Of how Freddie can feel them vibrate to purr when he pets them. Of how they seem to enjoy sleep more than wakefulness even after departing from their mortal coils.

It was not too bad to end up in this plane of existence, but more often than not, he thinks back of his previous life, of what he had left behind. He misses his friends and family. He misses Jim. He misses his bandmates. He misses Queen. On quieter times, he thinks back of the days from when he was still alive and wonders how his best friends are doing nowadays in the living world without him.

There have been more than enough times that he reminiscences at his own memories that it has become his form of escapism from this world that he now inhabits.

It was one such quiet day that Freddie wakes up after a nap that he senses something -or someone- in his oasis. He goes towards the fresh water stream and finds a stranger sitting by the stream on a rock. One of the cats is laying on the stranger’s lap, so Freddie takes that they might be friendly.

The stranger is very unusual to Freddie, in that the stranger is clothed in grey long robes and has a human face. Freddie had never met any souls that are able to conjure up clothes and a face in this world. But when Freddie stares at the stranger’s face a little too long, the stranger’s face has an effect that makes it off putting to look at them any longer than intended.
The strange being looks at him and smiles, as though they recognised him. As though they know who he is.

“Hello, Farrokh,” the strange being greets him with a soft, yet masculine voice.

Freddie looks at the strange being in shock, unable to respond back. Usually, with the other human souls that Freddie met whenever he feels like going out for a wander, they introduce their own names, if some of them can remember it. How might this strange being possibly knew his old name?

“You are Freddie Mercury, formerly Farrokh Bulsara, son of Bomi and Jer Bulsara?” the stranger says, with a little more clarity this time that they definitely know who he is.

Freddie does not have a physical body, much less a mouth to speak. He is but a soul, coloured in his favourite colour of yellow. He can create a humanoid shaped body, but it is mostly to have a form that is closest to what he is used to in having a body.

He may not have a mouth, but he is able to reply verbally to the stranger.

“Yes?” he answers meekly at first, then with more confidence, he gives them a question. “May I help you?”

The stranger hums, petting the cat on his lap before he speaks.

“Tell me. Do you not question on why you are here?”

“Not necessarily.”

“What we are here for is to inquire if you are brave enough to accept our offer.”

“An offer?”
“Yes. It is not a type of offer that we easily give to anyone, Freddie,” a feminine voice answers from behind Freddie, which finally made Freddie realised that he did not have one, but two visitors.

Turning to look behind, he sees another strange being in a similar robe, but with a yellowish tinge to it.

“What’s your offer?” he asks, curious.

“What if we told you that you can go back? A second chance of a life for you to live once more?” the yellow robed stranger says.

Freddie wishes that he has eyebrows again just for the sole purpose of raising one of them as a response from hearing that.

“Go back to where? The other side where Earth is and where London is?” he jokes.

“If you wish to be anywhere on that planet or somewhere else in the other world, we can arrange for that,” the grey robed stranger replies with what sounds like mirth under their voice.

If Freddie had eyes, he would blink in shock and sheer confusion. Mostly, he just feels that he has stilled himself, his disbelief emanating so obviously for the otherworldly strange beings to notice.

“Is it… is it possible?” he asks.

“Yes,” both strangers replied at the same time.

“I can live a new life again? As myself? As Freddie Mercury?” Freddie asks, questions coming out of him in a rapid pace.

“Yes,” both strangers replied at the same time again. Their one word answer covers all the questions that he had asked them.

If Freddie can see himself right now, he would have noticed how his soul burned brighter than usual. Excitement and joy coursing through him that he had never felt before.

To have the chance to go back is something that in his time spent here in living in his own memories, Freddie would not hesitate in accepting it. He can go back and reunite with his loved ones! He can live a new life once more and these strange beings—no, these godly beings are offering him that chance!

However, experience had taught Freddie that something that good must have its drawbacks. A ‘but’ that comes after it.

He did not need to ask that question out loud as the godly beings are already informing him of said drawback. It was the yellow robed being that spoke.

“However, we must warn you that from when we finally found you and decided to offer this, time in the living world has passed by for many years.”

Hearing that, Freddie pauses. It is not something that he had never considered about. Time moves differently here, that he is aware. Yet it is because he cannot see what is happening in the living world that it is hard to keep track of difference of the flow of time between this world and the other.
Then again, it is not as though one gets a chance in the afterlife of being given such an offer. To go back as himself to live a new life once more. To go back to the world that he is most familiar with...

It… it might work out, if his friends are still around over the other side.

“Will my best friends be alive if I go back? My bandmates from Queen, I mean.” Freddie has to ask, just to be sure. If they are no longer alive or dying when he arrives, it would make this a pointless offer as he could have just waited for them to come here, even if it will take some time to track them down.

“Yes, they are still alive as of this time and still in good health.”

It is that answer that is more than enough for Freddie to know what his decision is.

“Then I accept your offer,” he says solemnly. “Just… will you let me do one last thing before you send me off?”

“You may.”

Even though Freddie is aware that time on Earth is possibly moving faster than the afterlife, he wanted to give the cats that reside in his oasis a proper farewell and petted a few of the more affectionate ones that seem to be aware that he will be leaving them behind.

“Do look after these little darlings,” Freddie says once he has done what needs to be done. “They’ve stayed with me here for a long time now.”

The yellow robed stranger nods.

“I’m ready now,” he says, after taking a deep breath. “I hope they’ll recognise me when I get there.”

Freddie hears one of the beings chuckle.

“Don’t worry, we have picked the perfect place to bring you back.”

And the next thing Freddie is aware of before he can even say ‘where’, he is suddenly pulled in by a vortex and finds himself hurtling through a wormhole tunnel.

For a few seconds that turned to minutes as he falls down the tunnel, unaware that the atoms surrounding him are rapidly clustering around his soul and building a new body for him, Freddie feels like he is regretting this decision that came without thinking through it carefully, especially when going back involves a trip like this.

It is a good thing that no one is there to hear him scream.
Chapter 2

Freddie is relieved when the sensation of falling finally stops and he is on a hard ground. The landing was not bad - it certainly was not a fatal fall, luckily - but it did hurt. It feels weird to feel the sensation of pain for the first time, well, for the first time in a long while. This, Freddie thinks, is the big difference in having a body and merely being a soul.

Where he has arrived on Earth, Freddie has no clue, mostly due to the fact that he is distracted by things that are assaulting his senses. He can hear loud noises. Sounds and lights around him like a cacophony of chaos to his eyes and ears.

He looks down to the floor to avoid getting blinded by the lights, only then does he notice that he now has hands… hands and arms made of flesh and blood and skin and bones that belong to him.

Freddie looks up, properly taking in on his surroundings. He blinks as he realises that he on a stage. In front of his eyes, beyond the stage there are tens of thousands of people as far as his eyes can see.

A part of him wants to thank the godly beings that at least they have a sense of decency in making sure that he is clothed before his dramatic arrival. He dares not to picture what his arrival as a naked man would be like. Humiliation is not a strong enough word to describe it.

He looks around at more of his surroundings. There are wires and fluorescent tapes on the floor that he is sitting on, with a few amps and mic stands that he can see. Looking behind him, is a drum kit on a riser with some water bottles and towels lying close to the drums.

If Freddie is not mistaken by the clues around him, he has landed right on the stage of a goddamned music concert of all places.

“Hey, are you alright?”

Something touches his shoulder, a hand, and Freddie turns to see who is touching him.

There is an Asian man with mismatched coloured eyes who has gotten down on one knee to check up on him at eye level. He is looking at him in shock and concern, the commotion of his sudden appearance causing the man to stop whatever he is doing. His clothing style made it easy for Freddie to tell that this man is a performer, most likely a singer. He doubts that a roadie would wear a gold-trimmed red sash around their waist as part of a normal, everyday work attire.

Even without a mirror, the shock on the man’s face is more than telling that Freddie is indeed in his own body and his face is more than recognisable enough for this man recognise who he is.

The man quickly looks up in alert and puts his hand up to stop the guards coming up from behind Freddie. Yet at the same time, from what Freddie can see, he has a contemplating face that tells him that he is not sure of what to do with Freddie and possibly will hand him over to the guards and get kicked off the stage.

In desperation, he speaks for the first time.

“Let me sing something.”
The Asian singer blinks at him, surprised at such an odd request.

“Pardon?”

“Let me sing to the crowd,” Freddie repeats. “I’ll prove to you of who I am.”

The other man looks at Freddie for a few more seconds before he nods once and gets into business. He stands up and starts using his hands to signal orders around him. Soon, someone hands over something to the Asian singer, and he hands it over to Freddie. A pair of in-ear monitors and a receiver. These are equipment that Freddie is more than familiar with.

Once Freddie puts them on and the sounds around him are at a more comfortable hearing level, the Asian singer signals to the other musicians - his bandmates, Freddie’s mind helpfully supplies - and they start playing a new song. No, it is not a new song. It is an old and familiar song to him.

The singer has already started singing the first verses of the song, which the crowd is lapping it up after hearing what they are playing as the next song.

He is singing *Radio Ga Ga*.

A stage tech quickly runs up and hands over the Asian singer something else that appears long and dark coloured, which looks like a wooden staff. And then the singer swings it towards Freddie. Taking a better look at the staff, Freddie noticed that there is a microphone on its end that is facing him.

It looks similar to Freddie’s half mic, but it is not. It technically still counts, since it is more like a wooden walking stick with a microphone attached to one end.

While still singing without missing a beat, the Asian singer is looking at him as though silently asking him *Can you perform? Are you truly Freddie Mercury in the flesh?*

*And if you are, do you know how to sing your own song?*

And Freddie knows how to answer those silent questions. He takes the cane mic.

There is an electrifying sensation coursing through his whole body, a combination of nervousness and excitement. Freddie has not performed live in years and he is not at the best shape that he is since he had not even warmed up his vocal chords. This is spontaneous. This is risky. This is crazy. This is running purely on memory and instinct.

But being a frontman feels like second nature to Freddie as he moves towards to the front and sings the next verse and soon, his famous voice is heard by the crowd and his image is captured and recorded onto phones and cameras.

The audience, realising that the stranger on the stage is a really good singer at covering a Queen song, cheer at Freddie. To watch as the audience respond back with enthusiasm when he starts to sing is what reminds Freddie why he chose to be in a band as a singer in the first place.

When the crowds start clapping along to the chorus, Freddie is in his own world. He does not notice the singer that had started the song has stopped singing after the chorus part and is now observing Freddie instead.
Chapter 3

When he finishes his magnificent albeit short performance, Freddie is escorted off the stage. He suspects that the singer that had given him his cane mic had also given orders to the guards to treat him gently, because none of the guards have treated him like an intruder that came on stage.

He ends up in a trailer, one of the guards politely telling him to stay there until further notice. The guard closes the trailer door shut, and Freddie is left alone.

Now that he has time for himself to assess and find out where he is and what year he is in, Freddie searches for clues inside the trailer and to find a mirror to take a look at himself. He did not found a calendar, but a few fresh posters on the walls establishes to him straight away that he is in Reading Festival at the year of 2018.

Mentally counting, he is twenty seven years into the future, which means that he has not gone too far into the future so his bandmates are still around, but it is nonetheless quite a long time since he was dead.

The mirror came next, and Freddie takes a good look at what he looks like. He doesn’t have a moustache, that he obviously knew early on. His hair is long, almost reaching his shoulders. If Freddie hazards a guess, based on his old look from the past, that he must be around thirty years old. Preferably, Freddie likes to think that he is before the age of thirty. Not a bad age to be at coming back to Earth.

The clothes that the godly beings had made for him is a simple design that consists of a T-shirt, a black cotton jacket, a pair of dark jeans, and socks and trainer shoes. The overall style and detail to Freddie’s eyes seems generic. There is not even a brand or laundry tag shown anywhere on the shirt and jacket, so his clothes really were made alongside his body during that hell of a tunnel ride.

Freddie wonders how long he will be in this trailer before someone would come and check in on him. He did not want to think that they are imprisoning him in here. Even if they are and he manages to break out, he does not know exactly where to go or who to find.

He didn’t have to wait for long, for soon the door is opened again and the Asian (is he Chinese? Japanese? Korean? Freddie is still not sure) singer enters.

The singer has taken his ear monitor and some of his stage clothes off, but the red and gold sash is still wrapped around his waist. He sits down on the sofa, looking at Freddie and waiting for him to sit down at the one across him. Looking at him more closely in better lighting, Freddie sees that the Asian man does indeed have mismatched coloured eyes and it looks to be that he was naturally born with it, with his left eye being green and his right eye brown.

“You’re Freddie Mercury,” the Asian singer starts. The tone of his voice is more as if wanting Freddie himself to confirm it.

“In the flesh, if you want to believe it.”
The Asian singer nods and hums. He takes his time to look at Freddie a bit more and ponder his thoughts before he speaks once more.

“How old are you?” he asks.

“Forty-five,” Freddie answers. “Although after looking at myself at the mirror, I doubt I’m at the age that I just told you.”

“What were your last memories?”

“Does singing my own song on stage and dazzling the audience counts as my last memories?” Freddie asks, grinning.

He gets his first human response in that of the Asian singer rolling his eyes.

“Alright, better question. What were your last memories when you were forty five? On the 24th of November, 1991?”

This part is hard. Freddie had often thought back of the good old days when he was in the Afterlife, but he rarely thinks about that day. The day he died. He remembers it, but that memory is a painful one to him. He did not think about it very often while he was in the Afterlife, only reliving that memory occasionally to act as a reminder of that is how he had ended up in the Afterlife in the first place.

Although now that he is asked of it, he makes an effort to recall it. This man wants an answer, and he does not seem as if he will let Freddie go until his question is answered.

“I… I remember having a hard time changing my clothes, so I got Jim to help me. And then I closed my eyes to go back to sleep because I was really tired…” Freddie pauses from speaking, blinking back tears and grimacing as he lets his memories play it out.

He remembered it, even though it feels like a long time ago. Even though he accepted the inevitability of death with dignity, he cannot imagine the amount of stress and heartbreak that Jim, Phoebe, and Joe went through when they saw it finally happening.

“What happened to me after I died?” Freddie asks.

“You were cremated as following the Zoroastrian practice. There was a private ceremony where your friends and family were there to send you off.”

Freddie looks down at the floor, lips shut tightly and saying nothing.

“If I can recall that information, it means that my memories weren’t altered. And so is yours,” the Asian singer says, getting Freddie’s attention back. The more he talks, the more Freddie picks up that his accent is that of a Southern English. “So that means that by whatever happened, you really did die and somehow come back to life.”

“So I have,” Freddie says softly.

Then the Asian singer suddenly audibly sighs, shoulders sagging in relief. “Thank the gods, I now have a concrete explanation!”
Freddie raises an eyebrow.

“I literally saw a hole ripped open in thin air and then you fell right on the stage,” the man continues, his hands gesticulating and unaware of the weird look Freddie is giving him at the sudden 180-degree change in his attitude. “My bandmates have seen it, the techs have seen it, the audience have seen it. Security would have hauled you off and mistaken you as some impersonator if I hadn’t reacted. You taking the mic I offered and singing your own song was what really confirmed it to me that you really are Freddie Mercury.”

“So me accepting your microphone and belting myself out is a secret test to know that I’m the genuine article then? Not me asking to sing on stage?”

“Any impersonator could do that, requesting to sing on the stage,” the Asian singer points out, crossing his arms.

“Fair point,” Freddie concedes.

“But, no impersonator would have the aura and power that you have when you performed. You performed in a way that no one could ever emulate but yourself. That’s what convinced me that it’s you.”

“So what is with this interrogation if you already figured out who I am?” Freddie asks, frowning.

“I’ve been piecing together the picture to get an idea of what happened once I got off stage and coming towards the trailer to ask you some questions,” singer explains. “I had to sort through a lot of theories and eliminate each of them to find out what makes more sense. You being brought back to life nearly three decades after your passing is what I suspected the most. How is what I don’t know.”

The Asian singer leans forward.

“Are you able to explain how you got here?”

Freddie sits up straighter and crosses his legs as he starts to explain.

“If you want to know, darling, I was in a realm that I call the Afterlife. A couple of strange, godly beings offered me something that seems so impossible, to come back to the living world. It sounded so impossible and something that was out of a fantasy, but I figured what did I have to lose for already being dead and said yes. Then I got sucked into some sort of wormhole and ended up landing on your stage.”

“At least there’s an explanation for it,” the Asian singer says drily once Freddie had finished his story. “Even if it sounds insane when the others will hear it.”

“What were you thinking of how I ended up there?”

“Quite a few possibilities, but with no certainties. If you had still been alive, you would be seventy two this year and didn’t contracted AIDS. You couldn’t be immortal, because then you would’ve disappeared instead and there would be no body to prove your death and you yourself confirmed that you have your memories moments before your own death despite the youthful appearance that you have now.”

“What, no suspicions of me being a vampire?” Freddie jokes.
“Even a vampire can’t survive from having their bodies burned down to ashes,” the singer says. “A good thing that I didn’t count in time travelling too.”

“Why not?”

“If time travelling is involved, our memories would have been a lot different than what we know, even if we didn’t know it. The only person aware of the changes would be the time traveller themselves. Thankfully, that isn’t the case or else Wikipedia articles about you would have been vastly different than what I’m seeing now.”

Freddie wonders what Wikipedia is. As much as he would love to entertain the man’s various theories that he has already debunked, this is not his area of expertise. If Brian were here right now, he would have questioned how one would know time travelling is involved if everyone but the traveller’s memories have changed. The guitarist would have loved to talk to this intelligent young man.

Thinking about Brian is what reminds Freddie what he wanted to ask the whole time.

“There’s an important question that I’ve got to ask. Are my bandmates still around? Brian? Roger? John?”

“Yes, they’re all still around,” the singer confirms. “Old, but alive and most of them still in the music industry.”

That brightens Freddie up. He wants to see them right away, but right now he is stuck in a rut, with nothing but the clothes that the otherworldly beings have mercifully put on his body, and no idea how exactly he can find his friends. All he has to go on is the man right in front of him.

“I want to see them but I… I don’t know how to get to them,” Freddie says, eyes pleading. “Can you help me?”

“I’ll help you, Mr Mercury,” the singer says without hesitation. “I had only just needed confirmation that you are who you are.”

“You know, I can’t help but noticed that you have been unusually calm for this,” Freddie notes.

Other than that outburst that Freddie had witnessed, the man has been talking to him in such a calm manner and his thoughts are sound and meticulous to have been able to speak to him after all that has happened within such a short span of time. He had sort of expected something more, like more emotions involved or more doubt of the legitimacy of his identity.

The Asian man gives a snort. “I have my moments too. But when something huge is happening and everyone else is panicking, I somehow always have a calm and clear head to sort through what’s going on. That’s why I’m the only one who came in here to ask the questions.”

“I never picked up your name. You know who I am, but I don’t know who you are, darling.”

“My name’s Corvo.”

It has been a long time ago, but Freddie is sure that he still understands some Spanish and Portuguese words to know what some words mean.
“You named yourself after crows?” he asks, amused.

“It’s my stage name. I’m more used to hearing it than my actual name, much like how you’re used to being called Freddie Mercury than Farrokh Bulsara.”

“You must tell me how you got that name.”

“I will, but at a later time than right now. And at my house than here.” Corvo stands up. “Come on, my bandmates are outside, with their ears probably glued to the door. Today’s the last day of Reading Festival and I’m eager to get home. You can come stay with me and I’ll help you get in contact with Queen through their management or something.”

“Thank you,” Freddie says.

Corvo’s hand is on the door handle when he turns to Freddie.

“I can’t bring you to London, however.”

“Why not?”

“You’ve made one hell of a dramatic entrance today and the paparazzi will be swarming my house at London by the time they hear about this incident. It’ll be hard for us to move about, even if it’s just to push the rubbish bin out to the pavement.”

“I didn’t think of that,” Freddie grimaces. The tabloid media is one of few things that he did not miss or have any fond memories of at all during his time spent reliving his memories.

“Luckily, I got two houses. Since we’re in Reading, we’re a lot closer to my country house than my London residence. It’ll be much safer for you this way.”

When they open the door of the trailer, Corvo’s bandmates are there, more than likely having tried to eavesdrop on them. They are staring at them before they quickly bowed down towards Freddie.

While Freddie is staring and wondering what is going on, Corvo taps his foot. When they have not straighten up yet, he speaks to his bandmates.

“Sate, minasan, anata wa sudeni kare ni anata no keii o haratte imasu. Watashitachi wa ima sugi iku hitsuyō ga arimasu.” [1]

Quickly, they stood up again, but their faces have yet to be wiped off of the respect and awe of being in close proximity to Freddie.

Freddie can put up with that. Better to have people that do know and believe that it is him and can help him than, say, all the other bad options that he could think of.

With a few quick orders by Corvo, they made a loose circle with Freddie in the centre as they walked towards their ride, with security guards and a few others surrounding them as well.

“You’re all Japanese,” Freddie says to Corvo after they entered into a van.

“ Took you long enough to figure out. We are a rock band from Tokyo, Japan.”
“You just performed for Reading Festival. As one of the main acts.”

The Reading Festival that Freddie remembers but never got to perform at is that it mostly has British artists playing in it and the occasional Irish and American bands.

To that, Corvo laughs.

“Welcome to 2018, Mr Mercury.”

Chapter End Notes

[1] “Alright, you guys, you have already paid your respects to him. We need to get going now.”
Their ride is a calm and quiet one. Freddie had thought that things would be much more frantic and stressful for them to handle it. It was not until they have reached their destination that Corvo reveals that he had sent a decoy van to go to London instead to mislead the tabloids of where he went, which had worked successfully as it had allowed for their ride to be a calm and quiet one in the first place.

Corvo has clearly informed him with no ulterior motives over the half-hour ride that he will do his best to help Freddie, look after him and protect him from the world that will be curious and hungry for information to find out what happened in the music festival and to help him get into contact with the remaining members of Queen.

There are more than enough things to keep him preoccupied. Such as trying to comprehend that he is now truly alive and indeed in the future. Having just popped back into living existence, Freddie is thankful that he did not end up at somewhere worse to be his starting point. Like a sheep farm in the middle of nowhere in New Zealand, for example.

It feels like experiencing the gods’ sense of humour more than anything to have them choose the location of sending him back to the mortal world is to be on the main stage of a music festival. He can already picture what the headlines on the newspapers will be saying for the next few days. He had probably proven or broken a lot of theories that was once proved to merely be fantasy and fictitious.

With what the godly beings and Corvo said in the trailer, it gave a lot for Freddie to think about. He is more than aware that he had died, that he could not deny.

This second chance is obviously a good thing, but he does not know what exactly does he want to do with it yet. The year that he has returned to has made Freddie more than aware that his bandmates are at least in their early seventies or late sixties, already old enough to have grandchildren and even though Corvo had said that they are still active as musicians, at their age now they probably have other things that kept them preoccupied.

But having them alive and still around is all that Freddie asks for. Everything else he will figure out and deal with it later on.

So for now, Corvo is his current host and is taking very good care of him. The country house that he lives in is rustic and imposing in its structure, but furnished with modernity. He shows him a large guest bedroom with a bathroom attached that is situated at the top floor of the house with windows that show him views to both the front and back of the house.

The amenities that Corvo provides is luxurious. When he set up a bath for Freddie on the first night of his return, he simply picked up and tossed a ball-shaped soap into a tub of water. Oh, how fascinating it was to watch as the soap ball bubbled and fizzed! It changed the colour of the water into an inviting green hue and as a finishing touch, there were flower petals within the ball to decorate the bathwater! It turned his bath into something so amazing to sink his body into!

And the bath towels, so large and soft that Freddie almost thought that he is living in a five-star hotel
in Paris. The set of pyjamas and other clothes that were provided to him are so new that the price tags are still on them, and Corvo tells him that as he has not worn them since he first bought it days ago, it is now Freddie’s.

He is certainly lucky to have come back and encountered someone who knows how to look after him.

The next morning, Freddie has many questions about the future. Corvo seems smart enough to inform Freddie of what has happened since his death. The Japanese singer is in the kitchen and has made breakfast by the time Freddie arrived.

“I’ll try to answer it once you’ve eaten,” is what Corvo said when he said that he has many questions to ask.

Since his return is so sudden and both of them are aware that he is most likely in a new body, Corvo had prepared a light breakfast to see if his stomach could handle it. So far, his body hasn’t rejected the food being served to him. It may be due to the fact that he has not eaten anything since last night that just a few cut slices of toast dipped in a half-boiled egg feels like the most delicious dish that he has ever tasted. And the sliced fruits are sweet and juicy in his mouth.

And the tea, oh, how had he managed to stay at the Afterlife without tea?

“What happened to my friends and family?”

“I can answer some of your questions, Mr Mercury—”

“Just call me Freddie, dear,” Freddie says, picking up a mug of tea and smiling. “You’ve more than earned the right to call me that by now.”

Corvo nods. “Alright, Freddie. As I’ve said, I can answer some of your questions, but I don’t feel that it’s in my place to answer some of your more personal questions. I hope you understand.”

So Freddie switched to asking more general questions. Of what happened for the past 27 years since his death. He is pleasantly surprised to learn that same sex marriage is now legal in Britain and in several other countries. But from the abridged version of history that Corvo tells him, to Freddie’s observation, although the world had changed a lot over the past three decades, at the same time it still remained the same. There may be improvements for the good of humanity, but there are still wars and unrest all around.

“We’re always two steps forward, one step back,” Corvo puts it succinctly.

Corvo does give him some interesting information of what Freddie’s bandmates have been doing and how his band has become legendary. One thing that amused him to learn is that Brian is now Dr Brian May. The guitarist’s interest towards astrophysics never did waned even after all these years, and now he has a PhD to boot. Even more impressive is that there are two asteroids that are named after Brian himself and for Freddie.

“Have science and doctors found a cure for HIV and AIDS in the future now?”

“No, we haven’t,” Corvo admits. “It’s still around, and there is no cure or vaccination against them yet. Although there are medicine and treatment to delay its effects, it’s educating the people that played a large part down in cutting the chances of getting it.”
Corvo is silent for a moment before he says to Freddie quietly, “If you had lived on for an extra couple of years, there was a triple cocktail drug treatment that could have saved you, even at the stage that you were in.”

Freddie pats Corvo’s hand.

“Don’t mull yourself over the could have beens, Corvo,” he says with assurance. “I knew my time was coming by then. For all that I wanted to do everything that I can in that short time, it was under the knowledge that I was not going to make it any longer by then, dear. So there will be no regrets coming from my death, got it?”

Corvo nods. “At least you weren’t there to see the worst that came.”

“How bad was it?”

“The HIV/AIDS epidemic killed off almost an entire generation or two of us. Some governments were more than happy cut funding on medical research in order to let the rampage of the disease continue.” Freddie makes a disgusted face upon hearing that. “Even though anyone could get it, whether you’re gay or not, it killed so many and really changed whole generations.”

“You mentioned the word ‘us’, I’ve heard. So you’re…” Freddie is not sure what Corvo’s sexuality is. One thing that he is definitely sure about since meeting Corvo is that he is not straight at all.

“I'm bisexual,” Corvo answers. He stirs his cup of tea with a wry grin. “You know, I cried that day when I found out that you passed away. It was just a couple of weeks before my tenth birthday and I was not in a happy mood to celebrate it by then.”

“I’m sorry for ruining it. It must’ve been hard for you,” Freddie says sympathetically.

“My mum and dad loved Queen and they were crying when they read news of your passing. They passed their love of music down to me and that’s how I came to love your band. Still do.”

Both men stayed silent as they finish up their tea.

“Would you like to watch the telly?” Corvo asks.

He turns on the flat screen TV and offers the remote control to Freddie. It takes a while for Freddie to get used to using the remote control to move a cursor on the screen. Once he gets a hang of it, he goes for the first news channel that comes to mind, the BBC.

It is by sheer coincidence that he had opened the TV just in time to see the news channel is broadcasting about what happened last night.

“I’ve seen the news this morning,” Corvo says. “Not surprising that the Internet and social media were fast enough to pick up whatever happened.”

Corvo had explained to him what the Internet and social media are, but until he sees and knows how to use them, these are new things that Freddie has yet to be able to comprehend.

“People are going crazy in trying to figure out what the hell happened, Freddie. Lots of them think you were some crazy fan or a drunk guy impersonating you that somehow bypassed security and got
on stage. Funnily enough, only a small number believe that it’s really you.”

Hearing that, Freddie cannot help but scoff and feel a bit insulted. As though his presence and performance on stage was not enough to convince the doubters that they saw the real deal?

“Do my friends know yet? They’ve seen me on the news, right?” Freddie asks.

At that, Corvo gives a sigh.

“Until I can get into contact with Queen, I’m not sure. I’ve already discussed it with my bandmates last night that we won’t do anything until I reunite you with your bandmates. However, it’s more than likely that maybe Brian or Roger or John has seen the news and the videos posted online so I will eventually be able to reach to one of them and have a talk.”

“I’ll cling onto that for hope.”

“You can explore and do what you want in my house. You can also use my private studio if you want.”

So Freddie spends his day exploring the house and the back garden, browsed and listened to various new music from the vinyls that Corvo had amassed for his collection (and feel some sense of pride of seeing all the Queen albums and even a few rare singles present there), browsed through the books in the library, and then goes back to watching TV.

Watching television in this modern age is a lot different than the past. Cable has given way for streaming, and he can watch whole seasons of a TV show without having to require a schedule or record it on tape to follow any shows that he wants to watch.

He did not believe the Japanese singer’s warning that watching episode over episode can be addictive and suck him in so much until he is blinking blearily at Corvo who had come from the kitchen to inform him that dinner is ready and had to remind him that you do know that you can actually pause the show and watch it later?

It subsequently ends up with Freddie having dinner on the sofa while his eyes are glued to watching *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

It was late and close to midnight when he crawls into bed to sleep.

It may not appear to be much of a productive day, but Freddie is learning a lot of this new world that he is now in.

Elsewhere in the house, late at night and Freddie is already long asleep, Corvo is in the master bedroom. He had just ended his Skype video call with his boyfriend via laptop when his smartphone rang.

Picking up the phone, he notices on the screen that it is not a number that he recognises. He does not share his personal phone number to anyone but his closest friends and family. Warily, he answers the call.
“Hello?”

“Hello, this is Dr Brian May. Am I speaking to Mr Corvo?”

Corvo sits up on his bed.

“Yes, this is Corvo speaking.”

“Ah, yes. Oh—damn. Blasted thing,” Corvo can hear Brian muffled cursing from the phone. “Um, are you okay with doing a video call?”

If the voice of the guitarist is good proof, then the sight of seeing an elderly man with white curls that took over the rest of the screen is what convinced the Japanese singer that he has finally made contact.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter, Freddie gets reunited with most of his bandmates!

The bath bomb that was described in the story is this: https://uk.lush.com/products/ylang-song-bombshell
Corvo had just served breakfast to the table (bubble and squeak served with eggs, sausages, and toast) when he drops Freddie some good news.

“I’ve managed to get into contact with your bandmates last night and they’re coming here to see you today, Freddie!”

Freddie, who was buttering up a piece of toast, looks up at Corvo in shock, mouth agape and the butter knife dropping off from his hand.

“What time will they come?” he asks once he gets his jaw working.

“Before noon, I think.”

“I better prepare myself!” Freddie exclaims, putting away the half-buttered toast and quickly spooning sugar into his tea and stirring it quickly.

“Not until you’ve eaten your breakfast,” Corvo chides him, trying not to laugh. “It’s only eight o’clock right now. There’s still time for you to prepare yourself.”

After scarfing down more than half of his plate, he goes upstairs to wash up and get dressed. He took his time to make himself look properly dressed. Freddie is giddy with excitement, but at the same time worried. Will they really believe that it is him?

Of course they will, Freddie quickly corrects himself. His physical features are more than enough for them to recognise that it is him, even if he is now fifteen years younger than his original age.

Still, as Freddie checks himself by the mirror in the bedroom for the umpteenth time, he is nervous. It has been twenty seven years. Other than what Corvo had told, he has not a clue of what has happened to them in that time gap between his death and his return to the living world. How will they react towards him?

The sounds of the gate opening with an audible creak and a car driving into the gravel driveway is what gets Freddie to put down everything and go towards the front window. Peering down, he spots the car coming to a stop at the front door. Two old men came out from the back of the vehicle. Seeing them old and gray is something to be expected, yet a part of Freddie is shocked that they have grown old.

The way they are dressed shows that they are old. The way they walk also shows that they are old. From the second floor window, Freddie can spot some facial appearances that helps him identify them as Brian and Roger.

His heart leaps at seeing them, nonetheless. His bandmates are here! His best friends are here!

He sort of wants to laugh, but bless Brian and his stubbornness to keep to the same hairstyle for nearly five decades on, or else Freddie would not have recognised him straightaway.

The guitarist and drummer disappear out of his sight as they reached the front door and Corvo is there to greet them. Freddie starts to go downstairs. Corvo was calling for Freddie just as he reaches
down the bottom of the stairs and turns around towards where the three men are.

Upon seeing him, Brian and Roger stopped.

When Freddie gets closer to them, they are still standing there, staring at him in shock, unable to utter anything out of their lips. It feels as though Freddie had seen this happen before a long time ago, when it was a simpler time for them all.

“Freddie, is it really you?” Brian is the first to speak, his voice so quiet that the question was barely audible to hear.

Freddie gives a toothy grin. “If you’re scared to find out, Bri, you can touch me.”

Brian does one better by walking a few steps forward, wrapping his arms around Freddie and pulling him into a hug. Freddie does the same.

“Brian, darling, you’re old.” He even has that old person smell. From a side glance, Freddie spots Corvo quietly slip away to give the three men some space.

“You’re here,” Brian whispers, a hint of disbelief behind his voice. “You’re really here.”

“Did you believe otherwise?” Freddie asks with a fond smile.

“I wanted to believe Corvo so badly when he told us what happened. And it really is you.” All Freddie had heard in actuality is a lot of muffled and conjoined words, yet it is endearing to Freddie and his heart leaps in joy that he can still understand Brian even after all these years to figure out what he is saying.

Freddie can feel Brian shaking, most likely crying, and he pats the guitarist’s back in a soothing manner. When Brian pulls back to look at him face to face, there are tear tracks running down his cheeks, but the smile on his face is impossible to wipe off.

“God, I can’t believe it’s you!”

“You better believe that I’m the real deal here, Bri,” Freddie points a finger upwards and smirks. “Not even beings above us want me to leave this mortal world yet. So they gave me a new life and come to the future. Literally!”

No sooner when Brian pulls away that Freddie gets tackled into another hug, this time by an impatient Roger.

Roger is just weeping and sobbing loudly, hugging him as tight as his strength can give, rocking and cradling him as if he fears letting Freddie go.

“Roger, it’s so unlike you to cry like this,” Freddie tries to cheer him up.

“Shut up, Fred. I don’t want to let you go right now. I didn’t think in my lifetime that I was able to do this again with you.”

Damn, he can feel his resolve to refrain from crying crumbling with this reunion. Freddie does his best to blink back his tears. He had been anticipating this reunion and he does not want to be a sobbing mess. He is not succeeding that well when his eyes cannot hold back anymore and a tear
rolls down on his cheek.

“You’re here, Freddie,” Roger says, his voice choking with heavy emotions. “You’re really here with us.”

“I miss you all, I do. But right now, I need air to breathe, darling.” Despite Roger’s age, he is hugging him hard enough that the drummer is almost crushing his lungs.

When the drummer pulls away, he does not let go of Freddie, instead putting his hands on his shoulders and taking a good look at him from top to bottom.

“God, Freddie. Look at you!” the drummer exclaims. “You look really young! What age do you think you’re at?”

“I think I’m at age thirty. I think,” Freddie answers with a shy smile. “Come on, we can’t do this reunion in the hallway, I would prefer to do this somewhere more comfortable in this house.”

He leads them up to the library. It is one of the rooms that offers a lot of privacy other than the bedroom. It seems that Corvo had either predicted or somehow knew that they would use this room, as the Japanese singer is spotted having just put down a tea set on the library desk when the three men entered.

After a brief nod and smile, he quietly leaves the room through another door and once again gave them some space and privacy.

“So what do you two want to know from me?” Freddie asks once they have served themselves cups of tea.

“Can you tell us how you got here?” Roger inquires. “I mean, we’ve heard it from your new friend, but we want to hear the full details from you.”

So he tells them his story. From where he ended up in a realm that he calls the Afterlife and meeting the strange beings that gave him the offer of a lifetime to return to the living world, to how he ended up being sent back by arriving on a stage at Reading Festival and sang the one song that convinced his current host that he is the real Freddie Mercury.

“Where’s dear old Deacy?” Freddie asks once he had finished his story.

Brian answers it. “He retired from music a few years after you passed away. He’s been a recluse since then.”

“But he still deals with finances for Queen,” Roger chimes in.

“Does he know that I’ve come back from death?”

To that, Brian nods. “He heard the news and I told him as well, but he couldn’t believe what any of us said until I gave him Corvo’s contact number to have him confirm to John that it’s true.”

“So he isn’t coming to see me then?” Freddie murmurs, looking a bit deflated.

“He’s still trying to digest the news, Freddie,” Brian says sympathetically. “John took your death the hardest among us all.”
“The least he could do is come with us to see it himself,” Roger gripes.

“He’ll come around eventually.”

“What happened to the others?” Freddie decides to change the subject. He is a bit upset that John is not here, but he will eventually get to see him soon. “Miami? Phoebe? Mary?”

“Miami’s still alive and kicking,” Roger answers. “And so is Mary. Peter now lives in Prague.”

“And my Jim? Is he alright?” Freddie ask, leaning over so much that his trousers are just touching the surface of the sofa. Since his return, Jim is one of the few people that he is eager to know about what happened to his lover and in his own mind, his husband.

Brian and Roger look at each other, sharing a silent conversation through gaze alone until Brian picks to be the one to answer him.

“Jim passed away eight years ago. It was cancer,” Brian says quietly. “I’m sorry, Freddie.”

Freddie’s face fell.

Corvo had told Freddie yesterday that some of the people that were closest to him have since passed away. 27 years have passed so it is to be expected. What he never told Freddie was who were amongst those who are deceased, such as his husband. Freddie thought at first it is because Corvo mostly would not know who he might refer to, but now he suspects that there is another reason behind why he had been so vague about it.

“He lived a good life after I passed, didn’t he?” Freddie asks after a bout of silence.

“He did.”

“Thank you for telling me, Brian,” Freddie murmurs, looking down at his cup of tea on his lap, half full.

In his memories from his previous life, Freddie recalls all he had asked for Jim when he was at his deathbed, is to have him live his life to the fullest. Freddie consoles to himself that Jim most likely did it, but a part of him is still saddened that he is gone now.

When the otherworldly gods offered him a second chance to live again, he had thought that Jim was still at the living world and that he would be able to meet his husband. He had not a single clue or hint that Jim was already at the Afterlife when he said yes.

All he wanted to be sure of is that his bandmates are alive before he took a leap of faith. For everything else he would figure it out and deal with it later on.

“You weren’t able to meet him from the Afterlife before you came here?” Brian asks.

“Well, I didn’t. Not when I was still at the other side,” Freddie says with a sombre voice, putting his tea cup away and not wanting to break his host’s tea set by accident. “Like I said, that world is large enough that it makes meeting other human souls a rarity. Even rarer for me to find anyone who still remembers who they are.”
Brian, who is sitting next to Freddie, puts his tea cup away and pats his shoulder. “I’m really sorry, Freddie. We know how much you loved Jim and what he meant to you.”

“It’s okay. I chose to come back here with one thought in mind,” Freddie sniffles, looking at Brian and Roger and mustering a brave face. “That you are all still alive.”

“And we’re here for you, Freddie. We won’t be gone any time soon,” Brian says in his most reassuring -maybe grandfatherly- tone.

“And at least that bastard Paul is dead even longer and you didn’t see him at the Afterlife.”

Brian and Freddie turn to look at Roger, both men sharing a what the hell? look on their faces.


“You certainly know how to cheer me up, Rog,” Freddie deadpans.

Roger laughs, and then the drummer stands up and comes to hug him again. This time, Brian joins in the hug as well to turn it into a group hug. It is missing one more person to make this group hug feel complete, but for now, Freddie is happy with what he has in front of him.

And this is only the first of many reunions.
During lunch, made by their host who had whipped up a quick but filling meal for them all (and an exclusively vegetarian dish for Brian, of course), Freddie decides that he wants to go stay with either Brian or Roger. They both live in Surrey now, at different ends. Both men offered Freddie their homes to stay without hesitation as he is by all accounts, homeless.

Freddie has said that he is fine either way at first, until it somehow ended with two old men discussing/arguing the merits of whose place is better for a now young man like Freddie to stay.

“I live in a small village. I’ve got a pool and a tennis court and lots of space for him to move around!”

“Anyone who can get on Google Maps knows where you live, Roger.”

“What, as if they wouldn’t do the same to you, Brian?”

“There is that possibility, yes. But unlike you, I don’t live at a place small enough that all the locals and the Internet know who owns the biggest house in town.”

And the ‘discussion’ went on like that back and forth for Freddie and Corvo to watch. The only thing both Brian and Roger agreed on with Freddie is that until he is ready, he should keep his distance from London.

In the end, Freddie picks to stay with Brian. Partly because Brian has a spare bedroom ready for him, and mostly to stop the two of them to keep on arguing long after they have cleaned their plates and thanked Corvo for cooking a delicious meal for them. Although Brian stays in London more often, ever since getting in contact with Corvo the other day, he and Anita have decided that they will be staying at Surrey should Freddie wants to stay with the guitarist.

Although from the grumpy face that Roger is sporting and the large, victorious grin that Brian now possesses, Freddie does not understand why it seems to be such a big deal between them.

Freddie did not have much to pack other than the clothes on his back and a few clothes given to him by Corvo. He has overstayed his welcome, despite Corvo saying that he never did even as he prepares to clean up his house before a driver will take him back to his London home.

As they bade Corvo farewell and are about to get in the car, Roger apparently went to go for the back seat, where Freddie would be sitting. This forces Brian to sit on the front seat.

“I’d never thought that you’ll be so happy to take over the back seat of a car, Roger,” Freddie notes.

“Brian’s got long legs. He’s gotta sit on the front,” Roger says innocently, even though Freddie suspects that he knows why Roger decided that he wants to sit at the back with him.

“I’m already happy enough as it is to be back and be with you guys,” he says instead. “And someday, soon, I want to meet Deacy again.”
That makes Brian and Roger smile, and the ride just a bit smoother as a result.

The hour long car trip quickly passed by as Freddie has many questions of how Brian and Roger’s lives have been, how their families have been doing, and how the band has been since his previous death. Although he is saddened to hear that John retired in 1997, he is happy to learn that the band had continued on with one of his favourite singers, Paul Rodgers. Currently, they are now playing shows with an American singer named Adam Lambert.

They tell him about how Adam, who has been the latest frontman for Queen for several years now, could sing in a way that Freddie would approve. It intrigues Freddie more than enough that he is badgering them on when he can meet him.

“In time, Freddie,” Brian says. “I think Adam will get a heart attack unless we give him time to prepare for your appearance.”

“When you meet him, you’ll like the kid,” Roger quips.

When they finally arrived at Windlesham, to say that Anita is shocked to see him upon his arrival at the May household is a pure understatement. When a tearful Anita says that Freddie probably cannot recognise her, he corrects her by saying that he does remember her, especially of how she had made Brian happy again after his divorce with Chrissie.

That made her even happier and she hugs Freddie one more time. And then like a switch has been flipped, she fussed over how he is probably hungry, despite politely informing her that he had already eaten.

It is somewhat odd and jarring that they are best friends to Freddie, and yet they have their moments in which they either treat him as an old friend or they treat him like he is their son.

Things have changed so much, and the three of them are aware of it, even though Brian and Roger are treating Freddie like a long lost friend that had returned into their lives. Which now that Freddie thinks about it, it is what they are all going through.

Roger only stays long enough for an early dinner before he drives home, promising that he will come back the next day.

While Brian goes to see Roger off, Anita brings Freddie up to the guest bedroom, where there are some toiletries on the bed.

Anita leaves Freddie to check out the room. Just as he is about to go take a bath, there is a knock on the door.

“Freddie? It’s me, Brian. Can I come in?”

“I’m decent. You can come in.”

The old guitarist enters -Freddie still gets a slight double take to see Brian now at old age with white hair- holding in his hand a book.

“How is your bedroom? Is it good enough?” he asks.
“It’s more than good. Quite bigger than my room at Corvo’s,” Freddie answers, which causes Brian to chuckle. “So, what are you here for, Brian?”

“This morning, I told you how Jim passed away,” Freddie acknowledges that with a sad smile, “but I never told you what happened after you died in your first life. I can’t exactly give you all the answers that you need, but some of it lies in here.”

He hands over the book to Freddie. It is a biography book written by Jim. It mostly covers about himself.

“Thank you, Brian,” Freddie says sincerely, his fingers gripping tightly onto the book.

Brian nods, makes an excuse to leave, and leaves Freddie in his new bedroom and some catching up to do.

After a shower, Freddie spent hours during the night voraciously reading through nearly the entire book.

There are parts in the book that puts a smile on Freddie’s face, of funny and lovely stories that he did not remember quite well but Jim did. The way the words weaved together that it feels so much like the way Jim is. And for the moment as Freddie reads Jim’s book, it feels as though Jim is right there with him.

Then he comes to the part of when he died and the aftermath that ensued.

Freddie himself is aware that his emotions are quite volatile, but right now as he reads on, all he feels is numbing shock. He did not think that things could get that bad. Especially with what had happened between Jim and…

It took some time before Freddie notices that the current page that he was reading on is getting wet. Only then did he realised that he was crying.

The next morning, Freddie has several questions for Brian. It took some persuasion as the guitarist tries to tell him over and over that it was all in the past, that it happened decades ago.

To Brian’s perspective, it did happened a long time ago and he was given more than enough time to move on from it. However, to Freddie, even though he does not know how much time had passed when he was in the Afterlife, it feels as though all that he had missed out had only just happened yesterday, the wound still fresh and have yet to heal over.

Eventually, Brian relents and tells him what happened to Jim and what Brian himself and the rest of Queen went through.

When Roger came around the afternoon, Freddie does the same thing on him. Roger is just as reluctant and resistant like Brian at first, until he relents as well and answers Freddie’s questions. Especially after Brian tells the drummer that he had already told Freddie about it.

Once Freddie has heard enough what he needs to hear, he makes a request to Brian to meet an old friend.

Chapter End Notes
Next chapter is gonna be a heavy one to read through!
“Are you sure you want to do this?” Brian asks, concern showing on his face. He has been trying to persuade Freddie to change his mind on this.

“I’m sure of it, Brian,” Freddie says with determination.

“You don’t have to do this. You can just avoid her. I can just—”

“Brian,” Freddie puts his hand up. Turning to face him, he speaks softly, “I’m sure of my decision. I came back here not knowing what happened. I didn’t know this would happen. I didn’t know that she did this to you guys.”

“And we told you we moved on from it. Why are you still going through with it?”

Freddie does not answer that, but the silent gaze that Freddie gives to him has the nonverbal answer.

*You know why and who I am doing this for.*

“I want to do this,” Freddie says quietly instead. “I need to close this chapter that has been part of my life. It has been long overdue.”

The housekeeper comes to the sitting room where they are in and informs them that their guest has arrived.

Knowing that he can no longer do anything to prevent this, Brian sighs, and pats Freddie’s shoulder. “I’ll be at the next room if you need me.”

Brian takes his leave. Not a minute later, when an elderly lady enters the room, it took a lot of strength and courage for Freddie to stand up and greet her.

The elderly lady pauses when she sees him. It takes a few seconds before she takes a double take and her eyes widen.

“Freddie?”

“Mary,” Freddie greets her softly with a toothy grin, revealing the overbite that she would recognise him for.

Mary gawks in disbelief, looking at him for a while before she takes a few steps forward. She takes
her time to look at him up and down, paying close attention to his face in particular in wanting to be sure of what she is seeing right in front of her. When it seems to confirm her notions, she sweeps him into her arms.

“Oh, Freddie, it really is you!” she says with a warm smile and wet eyes. “I didn’t expect this when Brian called me!”

“You better believe that I’m back here and alive, well and truly,” Freddie says, patting her back.

In this moment that they are right in, Freddie hopes that his assumptions are wrong. Unfortunately, he cannot confirm whether his assumptions are right or wrong unless he goes through with it. He can turn back right now, but words that he read from Jim’s book and from what he had heard from his bandmates is what forces Freddie to push on.

The housekeeper brings some tea for the two of them and they settled themselves onto the sofas, one for each of them.

Mary, of course, asks how he came back from the dead, and Freddie delivers the story, from about how he was in the Afterlife up till the moment he accepted the microphone from the singer that became his first friend since his return, that he has given to Brian, Roger, and Anita.

Freddie puts a mental note that this unique story of his will be brought up repeatedly in the near future until it becomes common knowledge. Or at least if he is ready to step out to the proverbial limelight and will turn that story into common knowledge so he may not have to talk about it all the time.

But who is he kidding? The story is still amazing to him and he wants to be able to keep reciting it so long as he enjoys in how his audience will react to it.

“Hard to believe that it all happened, isn’t it?” Freddie says once he finishes reciting the story.

“It is,” Mary agrees. “I thought it was some crazy story that the tabloids were making up when you appeared on that festival.”

“The rumours were true to a certain degree. With how I came back, I don’t blame them for thinking that I was some impersonator of myself,” Freddie says with a huff and flips his long hair with his hand.

“I still can’t believe that I’m seeing you right now. I keep thinking that I must be dead by now to see you like this, all young and healthy again.”

“Well, it’s very much real.” Freddie sits up more properly and looks at Mary on eye level. “Look, Mary, I wanted to meet you to talk about something important.”

“What is it that you want to talk about with me?”

“It’s about what happened after I died.”

“Oh, you didn’t know back then?” Mary asks, perplexed.

“No. The Afterlife doesn’t give you any way to see or know what happened after you pass on.”
Mary shakes her head, taking a sip from her cup of tea. “It was such a mess, Freddie. You wouldn’t believe it.”

But Freddie knows. Brian and Roger told him so. Jim revealed it with his autobiography.

“This is why I’m asking questions, Mary.” Freddie takes a deep breath, trying to be patient and knowing that it is time to reveal it. “Why did you do what you did?”

Mary blinks.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve asked around. I was curious about what happened to my friends and family after I died. And there is this wonderful thing called the Internet that I’m coming to learn,” Freddie lies smoothly, not wanting to reveal that he had read Jim’s book. “It made me wonder why it was seen as such a mess when it could have been less involved in drama.”

“Freddie,” Mary says in her most sympathetic voice. “We were all grieving and it was all such a mess that shouldn’t have happened as you’ve said. The press made it so horrendous to read through the news—”

Freddie can sense that she is talking to him in circles, feigning innocence, and irritation starts to flare up from him.

“Mary, stop talking. I don’t want to hear a single word from you while I talk,” Freddie says, loud and clear, frustrated at trying to get his words through the circles that he is noticing that Mary is putting him through. “I want to know what you did. Not anybody else.”

For good measure, Freddie stares her down to make sure that she will not cut him off. Once he is sure, he continues to speak.

“Look, I don’t know what you were thinking back then, nor do I know why you did it. I want to ask why you kicked out my Jim. Why you kicked out Joe and Phoebe. I want to ask you on why you kicked out my family who had taken care of me and looked after me to my dying days as soon as I was declared dead. Can you tell me why?”

That catches Mary off her feet, and she does not seem to know how to respond to that.

“I could’ve looked after you had you told me as well that you got AIDS,” she says in a low voice.

“Even if I did, what would you do with that information? They’ve done more for me in those last few years than you ever did and this is what you did to them as soon as I left this world behind?”

Finally, Mary cannot stand the accusations anymore.

“How could I know, Freddie?! You told to your closest friends, but not me!” she exclaims. “You didn’t know what I went through to deal with your death! You don’t know how complicated it is to deal with when someone close to you dies! It was all a mess dealing with your will and estate and none of your friends stood behind me for what I had to do!”

Freddie looks at Mary, aghast. In the past, in his previous life, he used to be a different person when he was around Mary, for reasons that he thought he had understand his emotions. But for the first
time, perhaps for the first time in so many years since he first met her and he is not addled under
drugs and a deadly disease, Freddie sees Mary for what she is and what he is really feeling towards
her right now.

He had been hoping that she could prove their assumptions wrong. To prove his own assumptions
wrong. But here and now, after what he had witnessed…

He feels anger towards her. He feels rage, upset, loathing, contempt, disgust towards her and for
what she had done. But there is one feeling above all that Freddie says out loud.

“I’m disappointed at you, Mary,” he says calmly. It does not disguise the amount of rage that she can
see burning from his eyes. That combination was more than enough to shut her up and to allow
Freddie to speak.

“You’ve sold my belongings. You kicked my family out of my mansion and took it as your own.
You took away their belongings, even the gifts that I gave to them. You’ve done a lot of deeds that
make me angry at you. We’ve both done horrible things in our lives and up until now, I still saw you
as a friend.

“But this?” Freddie gesticulates with his hands. “This proves to me why I did what I did back then.
Why I didn’t want to tell you. But you know what you did that really sets me off? You tried to keep
photos of Jim and I from my husband and you gave my cats away.”

For once, Mary has nothing to say back. No rebuttals or anything to defend her on this part.

“Those photos, you know what they mean to Jim and you held onto them as if it doesn’t belong to
my husband to keep. And even after you’ve finally given those photos to him, you made it as
though he should be guilty for demanding something that belongs to him.”

Freddie stands up and starts to walk around the room, yet his eyes never left Mary’s.

“And my cats were children to Jim and I. Yet you treated them like that. How would you imagine
when you die, someone like an ex of yours takes your house and takes all your children away from
your husband and threw them into foster care?! Telling him that they and everything in the house no
longer belong to him because that ex decided so?!”

Mary starts to crack. A sob can be heard coming from her.

“Jim moved on,” she says shakily.

“Jim may have moved on, but it doesn’t mean that he had stopped loving me after I died.” Freddie
shakes his head. “Is that all you have to say for yourself after all that you’ve done?”

“I’m sorry, Freddie. I understand. But everyone was grieving back then…”

Freddie tunes himself out from there, not really paying attention to whatever she says. Oh, he can
hear, but he is not listening. Instead, he looks at her.

She has been his lifelong friend. She was once somebody very meaningful towards him before he
met Jim. She has her faults like anybody else.

But then Freddie thinks about the last few years of Jim’s life, imagining him slowly wasting away
from lung cancer and unable to know where to find his grave and with only whatever he had scrounge up to remember his husband by and the fond, happy days that they had with each other.

Freddie puts his hand up.

“That’s enough, Mary,” he says in the coldest voice that he can muster up. She stops talking.

He can finally see it. He can see for what she is apologising for. It was not for guilt or even shame for what she had done. It is that he is confronting her of her actions from all those years ago.

For a moment, Freddie wonders how he had allowed her to stay in his life when he was more than strong enough to get rid of Paul and lived through the scandal that followed.

“I’m really sorry, Freddie,” she says again, this time more quietly than the outburst that she had have.

He can take the apology, but it will never be enough for what she had done.

“Someday, Mary, I would like for us to talk again,” he says, calmly and in a civil manner. “But until I’m ready to talk to you again, from here on, I don’t want to see you again. So now that I’ve heard from your side and said what I needed to say to you, get out and stay out of my new life.”

Mary stands up, blinking back tears.

“Goodbye, Freddie,” she manages to say between sobs.

“Goodbye, Mary,” Freddie says curtly.

He watches as she leaves the room and closes the door behind her.

He watches her leave the house, standing just far enough that Mary cannot see him observing her getting into the car. A man that appears to be older than Freddie’s current physical age seems concerned at Mary and even though Freddie cannot hear it, he knows that he is asking what happened and he knows that that man must be Mary’s son.

When he watches her finally leave the grounds, there is a huge weight that Freddie feels has lifted off his shoulders and he can breathe easier. He slides down against the window and down to the floor, his head heavy with many thoughts.

If he did not read the book, or hell, Brian never gave him that book, would have wanted to talk to her again? However, would he have wanted to live under such an illusion that things will be fine the way it is?

Tears prickle out of his eyes and he struggles to not to let his emotions overwhelm him.

“I did it, Jim. I did you right, didn’t I?” he asks out loud, hoping desperately for an answer.

But there is no one there to answer that. No one there to hold him. There is no Jim to tell him whether what he did was right or not.

He is not alone, not anymore since he came back, making a new friend and reuniting with old ones, but he does feel that there is a large part of himself that is empty and leaving him unwhole.
Tears continue to rain down his cheeks, much like the sobbing noises now coming out of his mouth.

For the second time since his return, Freddie cries in grief.

When Brian comes to check in on him after seeing Mary off for that he is not sure whether or not would it be for the last time, he sees Freddie sitting on the floor. Quietly, the guitarist sits down next to Freddie and simply holds him as he weeps.
Chapter 8

The next few days is a nightmare to handle Freddie. Brian had more or less predicted that that part of Freddie that he is more than familiar with dealing decades ago would eventually resurface. Things had been so smooth sailing that at some point, the honeymoon period would have to eventually come to its end and reality must return for everyone involved.

A big part of Brian regretted that he had shown the book to Freddie this soon. If he had shown him the book later, maybe the situation could have been better dealt with. Or hell, if he had never given Jim’s book to Freddie, maybe this would not have to happen in the first place.

But it has already happened, there is not much he could do about it. It feels like it is all his fault, even though Anita, Roger, and even Freddie himself told him that it is not.

“He deserves to know the truth, love. Whatever else that happens after that, we’ll just have to weather through it and help him,” is what Anita had said to him after confessing his guilt of what he had caused.

“Even if you didn’t give the book to him, what’s to prevent him from finding out eventually through other ways? At least with the book, Freddie gets first hand knowledge from Jim himself,” is what Roger tells to Brian to stop him from blaming himself any further.

Still, it does not get rid of the fact that he started this mess, and all he wants to do to right his wrongs is to find a way to help Freddie heal.

Right now, Brian is consoling his best and lifelong friend for the second day. It is not a pretty sight to be around a crying Freddie, for lots of tissues and chocolates are involved.

“I did the right thing, Brian. I know I did. But why does it still feel like I’ve done a horrible thing towards Mary?” Freddie sniffs, popping a Godiva chocolate piece into his mouth. He had asked that same question yesterday evening.

And Brian gives the same answer as he did yesterday.

“Because, Freddie, the right choice is often the hardest thing to do, not the easiest.”

And Brian is more than familiar with such decisions over his lifetime. Of knowing that to do something for the greater good requires a sacrifice in order to go through with it.

“I did it for the sake of Jim and you guys. I did the right thing but it doesn’t feel right.”

When Brian does not know how to respond back, he gives as much hugs and consoling as Freddie needs them like air.

And then much like yesterday, there are times when Freddie’s anger flares up, scaring him, his wife, and the staff in the house at his rage. However, his rage is not aimed at anyone around him, not even towards Mary. In fact, he aims his anger towards the ones responsible for bringing him back.

There have been more than enough times for Brian to hear Freddie repeatedly shouting up to the skies that if the gods were willing to send him back to the living world, then why can’t they bring
Jim back too? Or why couldn’t they have found him earlier on so he would’ve still had time to see Jim before he left for the Afterlife?

The gods did not answer back to him. Not even Brian knows how to answer that. It only serves as fuel to Freddie’s frustration.

He is trying to help Freddie through the five stages of grief. Now Brian has noticed that he is stuck in a loop of the first four stages, going round and round yet reluctant to even reach the stage of acceptance.

In the past, he remembers how Freddie went through such problems before, and usually he was able to bounce back given sufficient time to calm down. But this one particularly worries Brian that it will get worse if nothing is done about it.

Worse still is that in a few days, he and Roger have to fly over to Las Vegas soon to do a ten-date residency there and neither of them will be there for Freddie for nearly a month. He does not doubt that Anita and Roger’s wife Sarina would do their best to help Freddie through it and look after him during their absence, but he doubts that they might be enough to handle Freddie when he is not at his best.

Or, well, if Brian is to be openly honest, if they are the right people who knows how to help Freddie.

The most logical solution is not even a good option, for he cannot bring Freddie to a therapist. Freddie does not have any documents and the only records that he would have are from his previous life and there is no doubt that Freddie is not in the right state to reveal himself to the world yet. Even if Brian shells out the money to keep things confidential, the psychologists will get suspicious and no one wants that right now.

There is John that he could attempt to contact, and if he hears this now, he would not hesitate to help. However, Brian does not want the retired bassist to think that he and Roger just threw a new problem for John to handle all by himself. Even if the problem is Freddie and they explained the situation, it would be entirely unfair to treat John in that way and he might look at them in a bad light.

As Brian continues to mull on, he jumps when his phone suddenly rings. Pulling the phone out of his pocket, he is surprised to see that it is Corvo, the man that he had met days ago, is calling him.

“Hello, Corvo.”

“Hello, Dr May,” Corvo greets him politely. “How are you today?”

“I’m fine. Quite alright,” Brian lies. “Is something the matter for you?”

“Um, no, not really. I just wanted to call and check if things are alright and if Freddie has settled in well.” Hearing that brings about a bit of surprise for Brian. "I know he’s your friend longer than I have even met him, but I can’t help but want to call and be sure of it.”

Brian smiles. “It’s alright, Corvo. He’s settled in well. It’ll take some time for him to adjust to the modern world.”

“That’s good to know.”

Freddie had been incredibly lucky to have met this man who looked after him. Brian had known of
Corvo as a polite and gracious host when they first physically met each other, and although he had only been with Freddie for three days, he is concerned enough to call and ask if Freddie is alright, even though the guitarist wishes to honestly tell him that he is most certainly not okay.

How Brian came to be in contact with the young musician is quite unusual, though. The day after Reading Festival, when news of an alleged Freddie impersonator appeared, a courier arrived at the doorsteps of his London house with an envelope that they are only allowed to hand over to Brian himself and no one else.

Inside the envelope was revealed to be a simple business card with Corvo’s name, the word ‘Orion’, and a personal contact number printed on it along with a handwritten note that contains instructions informing him that he should add the musician’s contact number to his phone, to call him because it is for a very important reason, and to destroy the card with fire once he is done.

The last one caused Brian to raise an eyebrow. He later received a call from Roger about receiving a similar envelope with a card inside it by a courier that only addressed to the drummer out with similar instructions as well, causing Roger to believe that the card came from a secret organisation or something sinister until Brian had to calm Roger down and inform him that the name of the man is real and Orion is the name of his band, and much of the information is in public domain that can be found on Google.

The unusual method that was deployed to send a business card to him is more than enough for the guitarist to figure out that the young man is a bit paranoid and does not want something as personal as his own phone number to be revealed.

“Dr May? Is something wrong?” Corvo asks, causing Brian to realise that he had not been talking for some time.

Whether it is by sheer coincidence or not that Corvo called to him just when he is running out of options on what to do with his current situation, there is one more option dangling right in front of him. It is a long shot, but Brian wants to be hopeful and see what this particular option has to offer.

It is not a good day for Freddie. He had woken up from his nap not feeling better, but rather still miserable. It does not feel like a good day for him to be awake. He wonders if he sleeps long enough into a sort of hibernation, that all his problems will go away. The feeling of dread and sadness and guilt is still devouring him from within.

If only he had fixed this—

Freddie perks his head up when he hears a soft rapping from the door. He pulls the duvet over his head.

“I’m sleeping, Brian!” he shouts at the door, not wanting any visitors right now.

“It’s not Brian here. It’s me, Corvo.”

Freddie perks his head up once more.

“Why are you here?” he asks, suspicious.
“Why, to come and see you, of course! Although, I didn’t expect that you weren’t in the mood to see people right now.”

“I’m not. I’m hideous right now,” Freddie says, going back down to a lying position.

“Will you let me come in? I would like to at least see you face to face. I won’t say anything bad about how you look.”

Freddie sits up, mulling over whether to let Corvo in or not. In the end, he makes his decision.

“Only you can come in. No one else. Promise?”

“I promise.”

With his permission, the door opens. And as promised, only Corvo enters the room. Gently shutting the door behind him, he walks towards the bed, his footsteps careful and silent like a ghost. In his hands is a box of chocolate, probably as a gift to appease his mood. Standing close to the bed with his hands in the pockets of his hoodie, there is a look of concern showing from Corvo.

They look at each other, with Freddie silently examining him until Corvo lets out a sigh. “Dr May told me what happened.”

“I knew it.”

Although Freddie does not show it, it feels weird having Corvo call Brian as Dr May. He is so used to addressing Brian with his first name that it is a weird sensation to hear someone else addressing him in such a formal manner.

“You vindicated Jim with what you did. It’s from my own opinion, I thought you should know,” Corvo says, putting the box of chocolates on top of the bed before standing back.

“Thanks. And I know he will be proud of me.”

“But you don’t feel like it’s a good thing?”

“Did Brian tell you that as well?”

“No, I looked at your face and know the answer is the opposite of what you’ve just said.”

Freddie makes a face.

“Fine. I confess. I don’t feel good about it. I just feel like it’s…” He cannot find that one word that can perfectly convey what he feels.

Corvo nods. “I understand what you went through, Freddie. I’ve been through something like it before.”

Freddie looks up, puffy eyes staring at Corvo with curiosity and a bit of skepticism. Is this why Brian called his new friend here for? For some sort of therapy talk that will get him to talk and fix him?

“You did? You’ve been through what I’ve been through before?” Still, that does not mean that he is
not curious about it.

“More or less similar to your situation. You want to hear the story?”

“I don’t have much else to do,” Freddie replies, shrugging. He had been listening on advice after advice that although he knows they are good advices, it just seems to go in from one ear and come out from the other side. It makes sense to him, but it does not stick to him. Listening to somebody else talk is a change that he does not mind.

“Sit down and tell the story to me?” Freddie pats the mattress. Once the Japanese singer sits down, he sits next to him, waiting for him to start the story.

“Alright, where do I start?” Corvo clears his throat. “Before my current boyfriend, who is outside with Dr May right now, I was in a relationship with an abusive girlfriend.”

Well, Freddie would not say whether or not he is considered a good storyteller as he went straight to the point. Yet it worked to have caught Freddie’s attention straightaway.

“How did that happened to you?”

“It was a few years after my previous girlfriend died and we met through mutual friends in Tokyo. Back then, I was at a time when I thought I could love someone again to move on from the grief of loss.”

Corvo has a grim look on his face. “And, well, it didn’t take long before the honeymoon period was over and things went downhill.”

“Oh, darling.” He picks up the box of chocolate, unwrap it from its plastic covering and offers it to the other man. “Come on, have one, I insist. Tell me, what kind of woman is she?”

Corvo picks a piece that has almond praliné in it as he continues. “She loves attention, and hates it if she doesn’t get any, no matter if it’s good or bad. It took awhile for me to notice that there was something off about her. We dated for more than a year before I finally had enough of how she treated me. Back then, when I was thinking of breaking up with her, I wanted us to separate on better terms. But it was what she threatened to do to me and what I’d seen her for who she is that made me decide otherwise.”

“What did she do to you?” Freddie asks, appalled, the misery that he has felt before now pushed to the back of his head.

“Things that I’m not going to talk about in detail.” With how he said that, in Freddie’s mind, that meant unspeakably bad things. “But to put it simply, I had to fight for my innocence, do a lot of damage control to save my career, and make sure that others knew that she was the real monster in the relationship and that they have to avoid her.”

From even what few descriptions that he is willing to say out loud, that type of person Corvo had encountered is the type that Freddie would definitely avoid having them around at all costs. He had learned that before from his previous life.

“She is horrible.”

“That’s only the tip of the iceberg to describe her,” Corvo says wryly. He takes a deep breath. “My
time spent with her ruined me. When I finally broke free from her, what she did to me traumatised me for years to come from feeling comfortable of being in a romantic relationship. It made me avoid wanting to settle down. I was scared that I might end up in that kind of a relationship again. At one point, during a period of time that I was at a low point, I thought that the reason that I couldn’t settle down was because the one person that I wanted to have that life with was already gone from this world.”

“Oh, darling.” Hearing that makes Freddie scoot closer towards Corvo and be the one give him a hug. His life story reminds him a bit like a Greek tragedy. Already suffering from a tragic fate, only to wind up getting ensnared by another one, each one worse than the last.

“Freddie, you want to know why I said that I understood what you went through?”

“Is this it?”

“I haven’t reached the point yet.”

“Oh, do go on! Don’t keep me in suspense!”

“I knew that I did the right thing for my own sake, and my friends told me the same. Yet back then, once I did it, I wasn’t proud of it. In fact, it made me hate myself for it. For letting myself end up in such a situation. For not seeing the signs and the red flags earlier on.

“But most of all,” Corvo turns to Freddie, “I blamed myself for putting myself and the people that I cared about through that hell for over a year when I could’ve just picked a different choice in the first place.”

And that there, is where Freddie suddenly understands what his friend meant about understanding what he went through.

“That… that was what I was going through as well,” Freddie confesses. He closes the chocolate box to prevent his tears from contaminating the chocolate pieces. “I kept thinking that it was my fault that I caused this mess after my death. If I had changed my last will, Jim and Phoebe and Joe wouldn’t have been kicked out of my mansion and what I did to Mary the other day when I met her wouldn’t have to have happened and I wouldn’t have to have made such a painful decision now.”

Corvo pats his shoulder, letting the silence take over and allow Freddie to sink those words in. Perhaps the others have known it, maybe perhaps not, but someone has finally put in the words that he had wanted to describe what was going through his mind.

“How did you live through it?” Freddie asks to break the silence.

“It took me time to heal. Years, actually. It was hard. Getting therapy sessions to talk my problems out. To eventually start to live again. To let myself see things the way I do now. To learn to love to be myself again.”

“ Seems that you did get better.”

“I did, and it wasn’t until I met Ed that I realised that I was ready for it again. And with him, I have no more reasons to be afraid of the idea of settling down.”

Freddie smiles. “He sounds like a good man that you met.”
“It’s what made me grateful that I met my now fiance,” Corvo says with a warm smile.

“Do you… do you still encounter her from time to time?”

“What? God no!” the Japanese singer exclaims. “She knows to stay away from me and she wouldn’t dare get near me even after all these years or it’ll alert my friends and family. And I’m happy for that. If I even mention her even to this day and they hear it within earshot they would start talking about ways that they want to erase her from existence.”

“They really hate her that much?” Freddie blinks, caught by surprise.

“Yeah. I don’t even have to say her name out loud and they’ll know exactly who I’m referring to. They refer to her as, and I quote, that bitch.”

The way Corvo said the last two words causes Freddie to giggle in amusement.

“So all I have to do when we talk about her in a conversation is by referring her as that bitch?” Freddie attempts to say those two words with the tone that he assumes comes with that underlining of disgust at even having to think about that person. The way he delivered it causes the both of them to laugh. It feels better than crying and being sad.

Once Corvo stops laughing, he taps at his shoulder. “Hey, Freddie?”

“Yeah?”

“All this that has happened to you? It just happens. It’s not in your control or anyone else’s. You can prepare for a lot of things to have a sense that you got your stuff in order, and you wouldn’t have known about the other problems that will happen until it is happening or it already happened.

“You did the right thing and it did hurt you, but there’s nothing wrong to admit that it did. You still did it in the end because you chose to, even if you didn’t like the consequences that came with it. And you’re incredibly lucky. I mean, who even has the chance of coming back to life like you did and decide that you want to do what you did?”

“I haven’t met anyone else with a circumstance like mine,” Freddie grins.

“You get a second chance of life now, and you get to learn to move on and heal yourself. And as you’ve once told me, don’t mull yourself over the could have beens. So there will be no regrets coming from your death, got it?”

Freddie looks at Corvo, impressed. He is using the same words that Freddie had used in their conversation from days ago and applying it back to him.

With a genuine smile now on his face, Freddie nods. “Got it.”

“Remember, you’re not alone in this second chance, Freddie. Live you new life as you want it.”

“Thank you, Corvo,” Freddie pulls him into a hug. “For really understanding me.”

“You’re welcome, Freddie.” They patted each other’s back and break off the hug.
“Also, you never told me that you and your boyfriend are getting married.”

“I never said that,” Corvo says a little too quickly.

“Nah ah ah!” Freddie waggles his finger, grinning from ear to ear. “I caught you called him your fiance once. I heard it, dear. So you’re getting married and you didn’t even tell me until now?!”

“I didn’t think that it was important to be known,” Corvo mutters.

“Not important?!” Freddie shrieks indignantly. “How can it not be important?! Where’s your ring?! I didn’t see it in your hands!”

“Corvo, are you and Freddie alright in there?”

A bespectacled, scruffy ginger man with colourful tattoos on his arms enters the room.

“Ed, things are getting well now—”

Freddie is quick to get his feet on the floor and go towards the scruffy redhead.

“Hello, dear!” Freddie greets him, grasping his hand and shaking it firmly. “I apologise for my slovenly appearance. You must be the Ed…”

“Sheeran?” the redhead helpfully adds in.

“The wonderful Ed Sheeran that I’ve heard of from your boyfriend here!” Freddie gives a toothy grin. “Darling, congratulations on getting married!”

“Um, thank you,” Ed says, flushed.

“I know this is terribly sudden, but I would be grateful if you are willing to hear it out from me, but you don’t mind if I want to attend your wedding?”

Ed blinks. He looks at Freddie, then at Corvo, unsure of how to react. Freddie looks eager to be invited, while Corvo is behind him, gesticulating with his hands that seems to indicate that he finds it a not good idea.

Freddie grasps Ed’s hand with both of his. Putting his charm to work and using his most sincere voice, he looks at Ed and says, “I have never, never in my lifetime seen same sex marriage came into reality, dear. If permissible, I would be incredibly honoured to attend your wedding.”

“Well, he has never been to a gay wedding before, Corvo,” Ed says carefully, eyes more focused towards Corvo than at Freddie’s.

Freddie grins widely.

It did not take much coaxing to get Ed on his side, but it still took half an hour to convince Corvo. It was all worth it in the end, though, for it resulted in having his name added into the wedding invitation list. And Brian’s name. And Roger’s. And maybe John’s.

It made him laugh. And look forward to something positive to the upcoming time of his new life.
“Is this your way of getting back at me for not having the chance to meet Freddie Mercury while he was with me?” Corvo asks to Ed once they have managed to get free from Freddie.

From the background, he and Ed can hear Freddie practically skipping around in delight and chattering quite happily with Roger and Anita, the drummer having arrived just a while ago to come check in on how Freddie is faring. The wedding that caught Freddie’s excitement almost seems like it is turning into a second thought to him, for now.

He had asked to show him their engagement rings (Ed wears his on his ring finger, Corvo wears his as a necklace hidden under his shirt the whole time), when and where their wedding would be held, what kind of theme they will have so that Freddie has sufficient time to find a suitable suit for the event. He had even gotten Anita excited and looking forward to it.

“Yes,” Ed replies without an ounce of guilt. He pats on Corvo’s arms gently. “But I get why you did what you’ve done. He needed to be at a safe place.”

“Still, you sided with him,” Corvo says, pouting.

“He’s very persuasive.” Ed leans forward to give Corvo a peck on his lips.

“You only got persuaded because you want him to come to it, didn’t you?” Corvo smirks.

“Well, you were the one who slipped that out of your mouth and besides, it got him out of his funk this fast.”

“He’s happy for now, which is better than before,” Brian interrupts the two men just as they are about to share a kiss again. He gives a warm smile at the the couple. “I didn’t expect that you managed to figure out what was going on in his mind and have him fine again this quickly.”

“Even I didn’t expect that it worked that quickly, Dr May,” Corvo replies once he makes himself look presentable to the old guitarist. “Although I do think that sooner or later, he may have to seek professional help.”

“It’ll be some time before I can figure out how to cross that particular bridge,” Brian sighs. “Thank you so much for helping me out with this one. And please, call me Brian. I prefer it that way.”

“I think Corvo might be able to help you with that one,” Ed adds in.

“Ed, he doesn’t know it!” Corvo quickly whispers to Ed, which Brian can hear.

“Oh. Oh! Um—I mean, if you want him to, that is.”

“I’m happy to have helped you, Brian. If there isn’t anything else, we’ll take our leave.”

Brian taps his chin, looking at the two of them with interest. “Actually, there are some things that we may need to discuss. Can we talk about it over tea?”

Before Corvo can even give a reply’, he and Ed got dragged back by a delighted Freddie. Judging by the way Freddie has snagged Corvo and Ed under his hold and wants to know just how the two of them met and got together, perhaps he will have to extend that talk over to dinner time.
Chapter 9

The May household is in a flurry as bags are getting packed and musical equipment get secured in their cases. Brian has his things packed up and ready to follow him to Las Vegas, Nevada, America. For now, he takes his time to enjoy some free time before it is time to leave.

For the first time that Freddie has ever heard of, Roger has already packed up earlier on and came up to Windlesham to wait for Brian. It does not take much for Freddie to figure out that it is because he wanted to see him one more time before the two of them will depart soon.

All the packing up and wondering what they might be missing to bring along for the tour reminds Freddie of those days. He wishes to be able to go out and go on tour, travel the world, maybe even tag along with them as part of the entourage. It would be fun to be in that position for a change.

But unfortunately, without any papers or documents to his name to declare that he is very much alive, much less a passport, Freddie is, by all accounts, a stateless person trapped in his adopted homeland.

“It’s not fair!”

That does not mean that he cannot whine about it.

“I’m going to be bored to death being stuck at home!”

“Give some time for it, Freddie,” Brian says reasonably. “It’s not going to be easy to get you to be legally declared alive again. It'll take time to get it done. But once you finally have it, after that, you would miss life being under anonymity.”

“Yes, I’ll miss it fondly, especially when I look back at how my freedom of movement is limited to being stuck in your house,” Freddie grumbles sarcastically. “I might as well find someone who can make forged documents for me just to even take a bus around here.”

“Come on, Freddie. Don’t think like that,” Roger says. “Brian and I will help you out with it. Just think of all this that you’re currently going through as being temporary.”

Freddie sighs, letting a pout appear. “I wish I can go with you and watch you two perform with Adam, rather than stay at home all the time.”

He feels like he is a child again, wanting to do so many things or else he will regret not having done it. Even when he has done so many things that he had wanted to do as his fame and fortune grew in his previous life which gave him access to many doors, he still feels like he has so much yet to do. With the new life given to him, he has a lot to catch up to.

“You’ll find something to do, Freddie,” Brian says, trying to cheer his friend up. “You have your friend Corvo who’ll come around to help you. There’s lots of stuff that you don’t know about this decade and you’ll get to take your time to learn it. Soon, you’ll be so busy that before you know it, we’ll be back home!”

“I only wish that I get to go,” Freddie repeats, looking pathetic.
Brian pats his shoulder. “I understand, but don’t worry, son. I’ll bring you out with me someday.”

Freddie stares at the guitarist, perplexed and wanting to be sure that he had heard it right. Brian merely gives a knowing grin while Roger is biting his lips.

“I’ll come back and help you get your passport made, and we’ll travel around the world like I promised to you.” Brian pats his shoulders. “Father and son together!” he exclaims with gusto.

“What the fuck, Brian,” Freddie finally responds, staring at the guitarist as though he had gone mad.

“Now take good care of your mother here, Freddie,” Brian continues on, pretending that he is talking to his own son and obviously enjoying how Freddie is reacting to it, the singer unaware that he is doing it on purpose so that he can stop his whining. “I’ll call back as often as possible.”

“It’s not funny anymore, Brian. You’re not my dad in any way whatsoever.”

“Freddie! You shouldn’t speak to your father in that tone!” Roger scolds him, before rendering his stern image to be non-effective when he laughs right after.

Freddie shoots a glare at the drummer. “Don’t tempt me to find someone who can forge a passport for me just so I can fly over to America for the sole purpose of punching the living daylights out of you.”

“Now, now, don’t you speak to your uncle Roger like that,” Brian chides, struggling not to laugh along with the drummer.

“Don’t tempt me to do the same to you too, old man.”

Before it can escalate any further, the manager to Brian’s Surrey estate comes and informs them that they have to leave for the airport. And it all becomes a flurry again as luggage bags and cases are carried and stored into the vehicle.

“Bye, Anita! Bye, Freddie! See you in a few weeks!” Brian shouts before getting into the van.

“Don’t get into trouble, Freddie!” Roger’s voice boomed from inside the van.

Anita gives a cheery wave whilst Freddie merely gives a wave and crosses his arms. Soon, the van takes its leave and drives off until they can no longer see it.

“I’m glad they’re finally gone,” Freddie sighs in relief.

“Oh, Freddie, he’s just playing with you,” Anita says. “You know what fathers can be like.”

Freddie turns to Anita with a shocked face that all but screams ‘not you too’.

“Would you like to have some tea and cake with me, Freddie sweetie?” Anita asks in a motherly voice.

Freddie stays silent, suspicious for any more tricks, until he finally quietly says “I’d like that” as his answer.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

The next few chapters is mostly of Freddie learning new technology more thoroughly.
Just informing you all as a heads up.

Although he will not be seeing Brian or Roger for nearly a month while they go on tour, for Freddie,
this means that he has a lot of free time and he must use it to learn of the brave new world of the year
2018 that he now lives in.

Ever since the two members of Queen have left for America a couple of days ago, Corvo has been
coming down to visit him, teaching him on a more detailed level of how and what has changed
around them. The changes in society and some of its aspects gives Freddie a sense of joy, relief and
freedom. It is not a Utopian paradise, yet it still amazes him in how far the world has come in its
progress since he last remembered it.

Parts of the world have become a lot more accepting of people of various different sexualities and for
someone like Freddie, this means that he does not have to be worried of his image in this day and
age. Then again, back then he got less worried about it as he got older and really wanted to avoid the
tabloids due to how invasive they were. There are annual pride parades and LGBT History Month.
In several countries such as Great Britain, gay people can marry and he got himself and his friends
invited to one such wedding.

Oh, if only Jim were here to see it—

There is a phantom sensation of a sharp stab to his heart.

Freddie is no stranger to that feeling, for it has been happening ever since he learned of his husband’s
passing. Even though he knows that Jim has been dead for eight years, and Freddie himself has been
in the Afterlife for what is twenty seven years in the living world before he came back, the impact of
his death feels very recent to him. He cannot deny that he misses Jim and how it pains him that he is
no longer around, of the missed opportunities that they could have had.

He can grieve and take his time to do so, but he cannot stay sad forever. He thinks of the many
positives, such as that he is now back alive in the future, given a second chance to live. He still has
his best friends around, even their distant one. He has dealt with a problem that was long overdue.
He is young and most importantly, healthy again. After living what he now feels to be a short life
from his previous life, he swears to himself that he will never take his own health and well-being for
granted this time around.

He consoles himself by thinking that maybe his beloved Jim is relaxing at an oasis somewhere in the
Afterlife, free from the illness and pain that he had suffered for the last few years of his life. Maybe,
perhaps in his wanderings he has even found the oasis with the numerous cats that Freddie stayed at,
so he most certainly would not be alone over at the other side.

With his mind calmed with such a thought, he goes back to learning what new things modern
technology can offer.

The night before they left, Brian and Roger had brought him some gifts to help him adjust into the modern day in the form of his very own smartphone and a tablet. The very first things that they taught him was on how to turn the power on his phone and tablet on, how to use the cables provided to recharge the gadgets when on low battery power, and how to add their phone numbers in.

“So it just keeps it there forever and I only need to scroll down the name list whenever I need to call you?” Freddie had asked to them.

Brian confirmed it with a nod. “You don’t have to remember so many different numbers. I can call you and you can choose to save my number into your phone. It’s already its own yellow page book and everything more.”

Freddie immediately loves his new phone, in that it is easier and much lighter than its early ancestor, which was the size of a monstrous plastic brick that he had tried before. Both gadgets contain built-in features such as a recorder and cameras and a music player and so many other utilities. The tablet has almost the same functions as the smartphone and seems to be something that only sci-fi writers would think up of what amazing technology humans would possess in the far flung future.

The smartphone and tablet are just samples that show to him the leaps and bounds of technology for the past three decades, but what huge samples they are.

From his previous life, technology and electronics were not something that he often took interest in as they were more Brian and John’s forte. In this new time, however, after being shown even a glimpse of the new capabilities that are offered, it fascinated him enough to make an effort to learn more of these technological marvels.

On a routine that Freddie comes to be familiar with over the course, Corvo generally arrives around the early afternoon to help Freddie and to spend time with him for a few hours. Often, he never comes alone as any one of his bandmates would tag along.

Freddie had not seen Ed around since their first meeting, to which when asked about it Corvo revealed to him that his boyfriend is a musician as well, and his absence is due to the fact that he had gone off to continue on his world tour and was only back in Britain for a short break in between touring.

One by one, Corvo introduces to Freddie who his bandmates are. Partly because Freddie wants to know more people outside of the house, and partly due to the fact that he did not get to know them well since Reading Festival.

Link, a childhood friend of Corvo’s, is a gentle giant standing at least four inches taller than Brian. Freddie’s first impression of him is that he seems quiet and content to stick by his best friend’s side and let Corvo do the talking, although Link does show that the two of them have their disagreements from time to time, if a little hard to spot as one such argument that they were having in front of Freddie consists of it being a mix of polite talk, a lot of eye contact, and in a sign language that they both seem to be fluent at. Yet on stage, according to the singer, he sheds his quiet image to become a beast with a relentless beat on the drums.

Yasushi, a bassist who seems to sport an air of aloofness around him which Freddie suspects hides a friendlier side to the man. Once they talked a bit more, it confirmed his hunch and Freddie was pleasantly surprised to find that they both share a love for opera and they subsequently spent their
time passionately talking about what their favourite types of opera are and who are their favourite opera singers.

Till, a German-Japanese rhythm guitarist with a sharp mind and an even sharper tongue, who when he made his first introductions, he does not hesitate to reveal that he is gay and seems ready to challenge anyone who has anything bad to say about it. Freddie is quick to become vitriolic buddies with him, verbally sparring each other one minute and then having a laugh over a cup of coffee on the next.

And finally Haru, the youngest member of the band who was so painfully shy around Freddie that when they first made a proper introduction, Corvo had to assist him in giving his introduction. Put a guitar or a pair of dance shoes on him, however, and he becomes a dancing, guitar playing genius. He sort of reminds Freddie of dear old Deacy in part of his demeanour.

Incidentally, it is this guitarist who contributed the most towards teaching Freddie about 21st century technology. He is very useful in helping Freddie to set up his gadgets, explaining to him of what is an application software and its uses and how to download it, how to use the Internet and what are websites, of how to learn to use a computer, and how to use the broadband and radio wireless to connect to the Internet on his phone and tablet, respectively.

For some reason, Haru also informed him that thirty percent of the Internet is comprised of pornography. Although Freddie is not exactly sure of what to do with that information, it is an interesting tidbit of knowledge, nonetheless.

After a few of lessons on how to use his phone and tablet to their fullest potential possibilities, soon enough, Freddie is getting a hang of using the Internet and other apps that Haru had helpfully downloaded for him.

To finally be able to understand and use his gadgets fascinated Freddie even more. It is hard to believe that the computers from his time have now come this far and can have a number of uses that are beyond its original scope, have it shrunk down to the size of a small notebook yet are a thousand times more powerful than even the latest Commodore Amiga computers that he had last seen in his previous life.

However, there are some peculiarities about digital technology that boggles his mind.

What for people who had grown up with computers having already learned and gotten used to the ever changing technology around them as part of their normal daily life, is all new and strange to Freddie. As a result, his questions can be confusing to Corvo and his bandmates as well.

“Why do I need at least two email addresses?” is his question for the day when Haru helps to set up his email accounts.

“Most people have a primary account and a secondary account to maintain work and for personal use…” and then he goes off in a rambling in which Freddie does not understand how tins of spam are involved, why security and recovery is needed, and a lot of modern jargon that he has not learned yet.

Bless this young man and his heart, truly, but much like Deacy or Brian when he talks about a subject that he is passionate about, he gets technical-minded and starts to speak in a language that a layman would not understand.
“I can barely understand what was being explained to me, darling,” Freddie says. “What I mean is why do I need one to use YouTube and the other just to use Skype? It’s ridiculous. Why not just use the one email account instead to have access to all the nice features that you want?”

Haru was not sure how to answer that question until Anita, who has been observing up till then, surprisingly steps in to give an alternative point of view by using clothes shops as an example that actually makes sense to Freddie. Satisfied that he had received an answer that he can understand, he continues his computer lessons.

Once he has his two email addresses and remembers his passwords for his respective accounts, is when the doors to the world of the Internet are finally open to him.

Partially.

When Corvo gave Freddie his personal phone number and told him that he can call him at any time if there is an emergency, it was out of good intentions. Now he questions whether it was a good idea to have done it in the first place without putting in a few conditions as he did not count in this peculiar problem as an emergency.

Namely, the lack of Netflix in the May household.

But that is the situation he found himself in when he woke up to receive Freddie’s call at two in the morning, being very tired and badly wants to go back to sleep.

Maybe when he goes to visit Freddie the next time, he will have to give him a timetable for when he is available on call and what really constitutes as an emergency.

“Freddie, maybe his television doesn’t have it installed,” Corvoreasons with him. “It’s not as if the TV’s broken without it.”

"What am I supposed to do at this hour to pass the time without it?” he whines.

“I don’t know, Freddie, go read a book or watch TV through the available channels it has. You can go and watch something like Dave, it puts on reruns so much that the whole channel looks like it’s stuck in a permanent time loop from the past.”

His suggestion did not appease Freddie.

“But I don’t want that! I want to watch the shows and movies without following along the schedule for it like I did back at your house! And some of the shows aren’t available elsewhere on television!”

And here Corvo thought that dealing with his twin nephew and niece being unreasonable when he brought them to Universal Studios Japan last year and they wanted to go on rides that they have not grown tall enough yet to get on was hard. Now the eleven year old twins have a contender in the form of Freddie Mercury.

“Have you actually asked Brian if he has a Netflix account?” Corvo asks, taking another approach. “You can use his account to watch it on your phone or tablet instead of the telly.”
“Oh, I didn’t think of that. Good idea!”

The phone goes off and peaceful silence reigns the whole bedroom, to which Corvo sighs in relief. He puts his phone back to the drawer, his eyelids drooping heavily as he hopes that he had solved Freddie’s issue for now.

Minutes later, when he settles in comfortably and hugging a comforter and feeling his wakefulness steadily gives way for sleep, the phone is vibrating loudly. Corvo groans before he answers the phone call.

“Hello?”

“Brian says he doesn’t have an account on Netflix,” Freddie says with a disappointed voice. “And he’s too busy at rehearsals to make one right now.”

Corvo sighs. “I’ll help you set up one tomorrow, Freddie.”

“No, no, my dear little crow. I can set it up by myself right now! I’ve already downloaded the app on my tablet and Brian said that he’ll send me his card details to pay for the monthly subscription fees.”

“That’s good to know,” Corvo says. Without missing a beat, he asks, “So I assume that you still need help on setting the account up now?”

There is a brief pause before Freddie answered, “Yes.”

“Freddie, why don’t you get Haru to help you for that instead?” He is literally too tired to even want to do a step-by-step instruction for him.

“That little darling of yours lives on the other side of the world! He’ll be asleep and I’ll be bothering him.”

Unlike me? Corvo grumbles inwardly.

Haru should have helped Freddie with that before he had flown back to Tokyo days ago with the others. Although to be fair, getting Freddie a Netflix subscription had not been something that they thought was important to do. Corvo checks the time on his phone, does a quick mental count on the time zone differences and almost immediately knows what time it is over in Japan.

“It’s ten in the morning over in Tokyo and he’ll be very much awake. You can text or call him with WhatsApp,” Corvo says, right in time for a yawn to come. “I’m tired and want to sleep, Freddie. What’s the problem with finding him? You have his number, haven’t you?”

“Well, that’s the problem,” Freddie grouses. “I don’t have his phone number to contact him.”

Corvo feels tempted to smack his own forehead. So that explains why.

“I’ll send it to you right away,” Corvo says before ending the call.

Once he sends his guitarist’s contact number over to Freddie, he puts his head down to the pillow. Hypnos and Morpheus, take him now.
He is just about to put his phone back onto the drawer when it vibrates again. Corvo sighs. Without looking, he swipes and answers the call.

“What is it this time, Freddie?”

“Um, it’s not Freddie here.”

Corvo pulls his head up. “Oh, sorry there, Ed. I didn’t know it was you.”

“It’s alright,” Ed replies, chuckling. "I’m guessing that you’ve been receiving a lot of late night calls from Freddie then?"

“Yes,” he sighs. “He’s been calling me just whenever I’m about to go to sleep because he needed to have Netflix right away. I thought he was calling me again for the third time.”

“Would you like me to hog the line so that you can slowly go back to sleep?”

“You don’t have to do that,” Corvo says, feeling guilty.

“I want to,” Ed insists. "You sounded pretty tired and I just called to check if you were still awake. I can tell you about my day and you’ve just given the opportunity to see if I can actually talk you to sleep.”

“Thanks, love,” the Japanese singer says with a small grin. “Put the important bits to the front so I’m able to listen to it first.”

He makes sure to pay attention to what important stuff that his boyfriend wanted to tell him about, giving his own opinions when asked for it. Eventually, the topics turned into more mundane matters and before he realised it, Ed’s voice had lulled him back to sleep.

Corvo is not aware that Ed kept the line open for a further ten minutes before he puts the call off so that no one else would bother him by the time he goes into deep sleep. He did not have to worry about getting another phone call, as fortunately Freddie did managed to get to Haru and he finally has his Netflix account and is currently rewatching The Grand Budapest Hotel.
“A pub that serves gastronomic food?” is what a skeptical Freddie asked from the back seat of the car.

“That’s basically what a gastropub is,” Corvo replies, sitting at the passenger seat on the front while Link is on the wheel. “It’s one of the better inventions from the 90’s that still thrives well today.”

Despite the late night calls that Freddie had with Corvo last night, the Japanese singer and his drummer have come to Windlesham before noon and picked up Freddie and Anita to go outside for lunch. This is the first time that Freddie is out of the house, although it is a supervised outing, and what makes it special is that today is his birthday.

After days being spent cooped up in Brian’s house, Freddie had been more than ready to just want to get out. But now that he is out, on the day of his birthday no less, he feels apprehensive.

“You’re going to like it, Freddie,” Anita says next to him.

“That sounds great,” Freddie says, trying to sound enthusiastic but falling flat.

“Is something the matter, Freddie?” she asks, having noticed him acting odd. “If it’s the place you’re worried about, I’ve been there with Brian before for dinner and the food they serve is great.”

“I’m not worried about how the food will taste, darling.”

“Then what is it, sweetie?” Anita asks.

“Well, I was so anxious about wanting to go outside for some time,” Freddie crosses his arms, looking towards the window as houses and fields pass by them. “But now that I am, I don’t know if it’s a good idea to be seen in public.”

“You’re still safe and anonymous, Freddie,” Corvo says. “You don’t have to worry about it.”

“How can you be sure?”

“We already covered your tracks by posting a statement on Instagram and Twitter about it. As far as the public knows, you’re a guy who sort of looks like Freddie Mercury that crashed our set and we let you sing a Queen song before you got escorted off the stage and we let you off the hook.”

“There might still be a few who would recognise me as that guy who crashed your show,” Freddie points out.

“Then we’ll just say that we befriended you because you turned out to be a nice guy,” Link replies.

“See? Relax, Freddie,” Corvo assures him. “People are more likely to know who me, Link, and Anita are than they’ll think that you’re the real Freddie Mercury. We’re just a group of people going out for a nice lunch in Surrey.”
Soon enough, they arrive at their destination, The Brickmakers.

On the outside, it looks like any other pub that Freddie had seen from the early days when he and the rest of Queen toured up and down of Britain. The interior of the pub is what surprised him. It is not smoky and dark like he expected. It is clean and brightly lit, the walls painted in a maroon red to give it good ambiance, and tastefully decorated with light-coloured wooden chairs and tables.

Since it is a nice, sunny day outside, they opted to dine in at the back garden. Even the garden is clean as well, the grass and plants green and healthy, with not a cigarette butt in sight on the ground.

When the waitress gave them the lunch menu and a wine list to look over, Freddie is astounded by what the pub serves that it is almost hard to believe that this still counts as a pub in the first place. It should be more of a restaurant.

The wine that was picked tasted nice. The dishes that they have ordered looked so appetizing and appealing to the eyes that it is amazing to Freddie that this is all served from a pub.

“I now understand why it’s called a gastropub,” he admits.

They ate and drank and generally had a good time. No one came to disturb their little group of four. Although Freddie had asked them not to sing him the birthday song to avoid attention, he does not stop them from saying happy birthday to him and give a toast.

“Happy birthday, Freddie,” Corvo says. “I know it’s lowkey and not exactly your way of celebrating an important day for you.”

“But it’s the thought that counts,” Freddie finishes, smiling. “I appreciate this gesture that you’ve all made for me.”

It feels refreshing to have his birthday like this, to just spend time with a few friends and not be worried of anyone knowing them to disturb their meal. It is, however, missing a few people that would make it worthwhile.

“It would be nice to have Brian, Roger, and John around to celebrate my birthday, though,” Freddie sighs, swirling his glass of wine.

With an eight hour time difference, Brian and Roger are not even awake at this hour to say anything yet. He is not sure of John. It is not likely for the retired bassist to ever forget his birthday, but Freddie has no clue of how John spends his time for this day, maybe remember him perhaps? A quiet ‘happy birthday’ to a picture of him that John has in his home? How does he react now that he is alive?

“I’m sure that Brian and Roger would send a happy birthday message to you,” Anita says, pulling Freddie out of his own thoughts.

“Or maybe through a video call for it,” Corvo adds in. “They’re supposed to play a show on this date as well, if I recall.”

Hearing that, an idea pops up in Freddie’s mind.
“It’s making dialing noises. Does that mean we’re connecting through, darlings?” Freddie asks, holding his tablet.

“Yes,” Corvo answers from the other sofa in the living room, sitting next to Link and picking at a slice of cake with a fork.

The two of them have been at Brian’s house ever since they have returned after lunch. It is par for the course for Corvo and any one of his available bandmate to spend a few hours with Freddie, except that it is now six in the evening, they had a long day, and they are hoping that after this call they can finally go home.

Freddie had texted to Brian and Roger a few minutes before about the video call, and they agreed to wait for his first Skype call. He had told all but his own bandmates of his idea in mind, but to be safe than sorry, they need to make sure that the connection line is stable enough to work, not only at Freddie’s side, but also at Brian and Roger’s side.

Thus, why Freddie is doing a video call at this hour, with his two friends nearby that can help in case he encounters a technical problem that he will have no idea to how deal with.

A few seconds later, the screen changes and Brian’s face appears on it.

“Freddie! It’s good to see you!” Brian greets with delight. Standing behind him is Roger.

“Brian! Roger! I’ve just managed to learn how to use Skype! I can’t believe that I’m talking to you two from the other side of Earth by video! Hello!” he waves excitedly at the camera, to which the guitarist and the drummer respond by waving back.

“And Corvo and Link are here as well!” He pulls the tablet away from him, aiming the tablet’s camera lens towards the two members of Orion, who waved at the tablet.

“It’s good to see you two as well!” Brian exclaims. “Oh! And happy birthday, Freddie!”

“Happy birthday, Freddie!” Roger shouts behind Brian, grinning. “So are you still twenty nine or are you now thirty years old?” he asks cheekily.

“Very funny, Roger,” Freddie replies with a huff.

“So how was your birthday?” Brian quickly asks. “Did you received the cake that we ordered for you?”

“I had a wonderful lunch at a gastropub called The Brickmakers with your wife and our friends from Orion, and yes, I did received the birthday cake! Thank you so much for it!” The birthday cake was small, enough for a few people to share, but beautifully decorated with a pleasing aesthetic that Freddie took a few pictures of it with his phone.

Freddie leans towards the tablet. “Listen, I called to you two for a reason.”

“What is it?” Roger asks.

Freddie explains to them what he wants them to do. Once they hear it, the two active members of
Queen find the plan feasible. Since it is Freddie’s birthday, doing this can be considered a gift for Freddie himself.

“Did they propose the idea to you?” Brian inquires.

“No,” Corvo is the one to answer, finishing his slice of cake. “It’s all Freddie’s idea, start to end.”

“It’s doable with either my phone or yours,” Roger says. “The cameras and microphone in it are more than good enough to record it.”

“Yes, but maybe we can get a video camera to film it, it’ll be better for both audio and video quality,” Brian suggests.

“That is better,” the drummer agrees. “But we’ll still need someone to help how to do that and to record it.”

“I’m sure we can get a couple of people from the crew to do that. We got a lot of time now to figure out how to get it done.”

“Now I get to watch you guys play from the confines of your home! It’ll be like a personal livestream for me!” Freddie exclaims in joy. His idea is starting to get better than what he had originally thought out!

“Speaking of which, where’s Adam? Can I meet him right now?” Freddie asks. He had almost forgotten that he did this video call for another reason.

“Freddie, you might have to slow down.”

“Why?”

“Well, first things first, he doesn’t know that you’re alive again. Although he might get excited to see you, I don’t know how he’ll handle it,” Brian says with some worry. Other than a trusted few individuals, none of the people in their circle and crew know about Freddie’s return from the Afterlife yet.

“So call him then! Let him in on the secret! It’s not as if it’s a bad thing to meet me!”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure, Brian!” Freddie insists.

“Alright then, if you say so, Freddie.”

“Hey, Adam!” Roger shouts to the singer who is somewhere off screen. “There’s someone here who wants to meet you!”

Moments later, a handsome man enters the frame.

“Who do you want me to meet, guys?” Adam asks, looking around. “Is it someone important?”

“He’s right here,” Brian holds out his phone for him to see.
Adam blinks, gets closer to the screen. He looks at what he is seeing with confusion at first, and then in shock and disbelief.

Freddie grins, holding back a giggle. Up close to the camera, he can see that Adam is quite a handsome and beautiful man.

Adam pulls back and looks at Brian and Roger, his face pale as though he had seen a ghost. Which when one looks at it that way, it is hard to blame him to think that he is seeing one right now on the phone. He points a finger at Brian’s phone. “Brian, Roger, i-is that really…?”

“It’s really him, Adam,” Brian helps to confirm. “That’s Freddie in the flesh. He’s alive, young and healthy again, in my house in Surrey.”

“Hello, darling!” Freddie greets with a cheery wave.

Adam’s jaw dropped. He takes a couple of steps back, surprise showing on his face even as he sports a big grin.

“Oh my god, so I’ve just met Freddie—I’m just, I don’t know what to say!” he says in a high pitched voice.

“Well I, for one, can say that I’m delighted to meet you, Adam Lambert!”

“He knows my name!” Adam squeaks in excitement. He looks at Brian and Roger. “Tell me this is real and not just some fantastic dream that I’m in!”

“It’s really Freddie, Adam,” Roger assures the young man, grinning from ear to ear. “We’ve reunited with him more than a week ago thanks to the guys from Orion. Two of them are there with him right now.”

“How did that happen?!” the younger singer asks. “How is he back?! And you guys didn’t tell me he’s back?!”

“It’s going to be a long story that we can tell you later, Adam. We’re sorry that we didn’t tell you about it until now, but Freddie insisted that he wanted to meet you in his first Skype call and we’ve been talking about giving him a personal livestream view of the show tonight as a birthday gift for him,” Brian explains.

Adam blinks, his mouth agape. “Really?”

“Yes, my dear!” Freddie confirmed. “I want to see how you shine under the spotlight with my friends! I’ve heard that you’re an amazing performer yourself, darling!”

“I…”

When they least expected it, Adam’s eyes rolled upwards and he suddenly dropped off from the camera’s view, causing alarm to everyone who had seen it. Brian is still holding his phone so that when he looks down, the three men in Britain who now crowd towards Freddie’s tablet can see Adam now collapsed on the floor, unconscious.

“What just happened?” Freddie asks, staring at the tablet with wide eyes.
“I think he fainted,” Corvo says, equally shocked.

Roger and an assistant that came to help turned the unconscious Adam to lie on his back, with the drummer trying to get Adam to respond and wake up.

“I may have made too much of an impression on him,” Freddie murmurs. It might have been the pressure that Adam suddenly finds himself having to perform a show tonight with the knowledge that Freddie will be watching, on the day of his birthday, no less.

“It’s a good thing that we did your first video call before the show,” Brian says.

The plan will still proceed, once they get Adam awake again.

The ball has been rolled over to the other side and while Brian and Roger proceed to do most of the work to set Freddie’s idea into reality, Freddie does not need to do much other than to go to bed early and set his alarm clock. Since there is an eight hour time difference between them, that means the show which normally starts at 8 P.M. in Las Vegas would start at 4 A.M. on Freddie’s side in England.

Worried that he would get something wrong, Freddie insisted that the two members of Orion should stay overnight at Windlesham to help him. Even though he now knows how to initiate a video call, that does not mean that nothing will go wrong. Better to have someone who knows how to fix things by his side than none at all.

At first, both men were reluctant about it. Even after being told that Mr and Mrs May would not mind about it, they are still acting reluctant until Freddie demands for what are the reasons for not wanting to stay.

“My girlfriend doesn’t want me to stay out late like this without a reason why and she doesn’t know about your existence yet,” is Link’s excuse.

“I have cats to feed at home,” is Corvo’s excuse.

Freddie looks at the two of them, hands on his hips.

“Now I admit, you both have valid reasons. But you,” he points at Corvo, “you can feed your cats and come back here. And since now you revealed to me that you have cats, I insist that you come back so that I get to see photos of your little darlings as well.”

Realised that he is backed up to a wall, Corvo tries to convince Link that he should stay as well, for reasons that are lost in translation to Freddie literally as they argued it out in their native tongue. All he can guess is that they are bickering at whether one or both of them should stay.

They kept at it for several minutes before they finally decided it out with a round of rock, paper, and scissors. Unfortunately for Corvo, Link won.

Once Freddie gets the promise to return extracted out of Corvo, Link drives him home so that he can take some stuff and his own car to drive back to Windlesham. Corvo returned a couple of hours later with not only a bag of overnight clothes, but also his laptop and some cables.
Reassured that the Japanese singer is now in the same house with him, Freddie goes to bed. It was hard to sleep, mostly due to excitement at what is to come. Then again, he had often run on little sleep in his past life, so he is not surprised to find that he woke up minutes before his alarm is supposed to ring.

He finds Corvo tinkering with the television in the living room with his laptop in hand. When asked what he is doing, Corvo gives him a surprise.

Freddie will not be watching the livestream through his tablet, but through the large, flat screen television in the living room. A cable connects his laptop to the TV. Using the remote control and pressing a button on it changes the television screen to share the exact same display as on the computer.

Freddie hugs Corvo, giving him a few well placed kisses to his cheeks.

“I knew you would turn into one of my favourite friends!” he says in glee. “You give me the best of gifts!”

“They’re not skimping quality on their side, so I might as well do the same,” is all Corvo can say.

Freddie is surprised to see Anita enter the living room, bringing with her mugs of tea and biscuits on a tray.

“I had forewarned Mrs May the night before that it will be noisy when we watch the livestream. She decided to get up early as well to watch it,” Corvo explains.

They set the time of when to initiate the video call by at least half an hour before show time, so when the call is connected to Las Vegas, there is still some time for them to chat a bit.

When they are connected through, they can see Brian and Roger on the screen, but both men are not facing the camera. Rather, Freddie is looking at them the two of them looking at a laptop with the Skype application on.

“Right, well. We got the camera set up. Now, let’s see...” Brian turns towards what must be the camera. “Hello? Freddie, can you see and hear us?”

“Clear as day, Brian,” Freddie replies.

“That’s excellent news to hear. You guys are up early. Even you’re up, Anita!” Brian says in surprise, after taking a look at the computer to see who is present at the other side.

“I can’t miss out on a good Queen show, Brian,” Anita replies with a smile. “And right from our own living room.”

“You mean a great Queen show!” Roger corrects her, chuckling.

“The three of you are watching it from the living room?” Brian asks.

“We’re watching the show on livestream using my laptop connected to your television,” Corvo says. “It’s a better way to experience the show for Freddie.”
“I’m already getting an awesome gift from all of you!” Freddie laughs, very much delighted.

Soon, Adam comes into the screen, coming towards the guitarist and drummer.

“You guys ready for it?” Adam asks. Then he noticed the laptop and the video camera pointed at him. “Oh, hey Freddie! Hello, Mrs May!” he turns to wave at the camera, after looking at the computer to see who are present in the call. “And I’m guessing the guy next to you is the famous Corvo from Orion, right?”

“Hello to you too, Adam,” Corvo greets back.

“Looks like we’re going to be on stage soon,” Brian says. “The cameraman’s going to take shots at some good spots so you’ll get the best views during the show.”

“It’s a Queen show like no other that you’ve seen before, Freddie. You’re going to love it!” Roger says, giving a thumbs up.

“I’ll take your word for it, Rog.” Freddie says. “You won’t faint this time, will you Adam?” he teases to the singer.

This time, Adam shows that he is not as overwhelmed as he was hours before by rolling his eyes. “I’ve done it once in front of an idol that I never thought I’d ever meet in my lifetime, so I won’t do it twice.”

After they exchange some words of good luck to the band, the cameraman is the first to leave, going towards one of the vantage spots in the venue. Minutes after settling in, the band comes on stage to a raucous roar from the crowd.

The show starts off with a bang. Starting with a fast rendition of ‘We Will Rock You’ before Adam proceeds with the following songs: Tie Your Mother Down, Fat Bottomed Girls, and Killer Queen. Clearly, after Paul Rodgers, Brian and Roger have picked the right singer to sing those songs, as Adam sung those songs with all his heart. The way he moves on the stage is distinctively his own moves, not a replica of Freddie’s, but nonetheless it complements well with Queen’s music.

And Roger is right, Freddie is indeed impressed by the stage setup. Technology had not only caught up for music, but also in how it can applied for use in stage performance. He had certainly noticed how the spotlight constantly make adjustments every time Adam moves on stage, even for taking a couple of steps forward.

It is a weird perspective for Freddie to watch a Queen show where he is not on stage to be the one who leads the show. He watches as they play songs that what was once new and experimental back then are now considered as classics. Even though this is his first time watching a Queen + Adam Lambert live show, there is this feeling within Freddie that they are performing in more enthusiastic energy than usual.

Considering who is watching it from home, maybe they are putting a lot more into it because of him and that puts a sparkle of glee within himself.

After finishing ‘Don’t Stop Me Now’, the band takes a breather and Adam starts to speak to the audience. The cameraman had already moved to another vantage point some time ago.

“It’s September the Fifth and for all you Queen fans out there, I think you all know that today is
Freddie’s birthday!”

The audience cheered.

“Right now, at this moment, he’s here with us,” Adam winked at the camera, knowing that Freddie is watching and the audience is unaware of that what Adam told them are his exact words. “He is a legendary man, a hero to me and to all you people out there. So let’s celebrate his birthday as he deserves it!”

The audience cheered even louder, the scene of it captured by the cameraman for Freddie and his friends to see.

“So everyone, let’s sing him a happy birthday!”

With Brian playing the melody with his guitar, Adam and Roger lead the crowd to sing the song. To Freddie, watching it with Anita and Corvo between him, the scene brings a big, toothy smile to his face. Although the audience in Las Vegas may not be aware of it, to sing happy birthday for Freddie is a birthday gift that he accepts with sheer gratitude.

“So can you guys make me one little promise tonight, just one, ah?” Adam says, to which the audience responded with ‘Yes.’

“There’s gonna be a lot of call and response in this show, so let’s get it going,” Adam says, letting out a small laugh. “Can you make me a promise?” he repeated once again. And the audience answered with another ‘Yes.’

“Can you promise that we will celebrate Freddie and his birthday and Queen together? Yeah? Then I will make you an unrehearsed promise.”

Adam returns to the main stage, with the camera following his direction.

“Spontaneous, right?” he says before the band proceeds to play ‘Bicycle Race.’ The show continues on with another fourteen songs, a couple of solos by Roger and Brian, respectively, and a sing-a-long using a recorded video of Freddie leading the audience to follow along his vocal improvisation.

The three people in the living room enjoyed themselves immensely throughout it all. Freddie sings along to many of the songs that were played and cannot stop moving his body on the sofa, Anita watches and sometimes participates by clapping along to the more energetic songs, and Corvo is humming along to the songs, sometimes joining Freddie to sing some of the ones that are his favourites.

The cameraman did a superb job in their role, capturing the show from different locations throughout the venue to give the three audience from home the best angles to watch.

When it came to ‘Love Of My Life’, however, something about the whole scene that they watched captured Freddie’s attention. With the camera facing dead centre towards Brian alone on the stage, sitting on a chair and playing the song with an acoustic guitar, it gave them what feels like watching the show directly from the audience’s point of view. Hearing the audience singing the whole song brings a tear to his eyes and that feeling of amazement within Freddie that never ceased every time they play that song.

It is what came next in the song that puts Freddie to silence. Although the audience are cheering, the
sight of what he sees on that stage broke his heart and the floodgates were unable to hold back his emotions.

By the end of the song, Freddie is crying and sniffing loudly as Corvo gives him a hug and Anita pulls tissue after tissue out of a tissue box for him to blow his nose and wipe off his tears. It took a couple of songs before Freddie is alright again.

The show ended up on a high note with ‘We Are the Champions’ and they all gave an applause to the band, even though they know that none of them can see it.

Overall, the gift that is given to Freddie has given him a smile so big and bright, that it cannot be wiped off for the rest of the day.

Chapter End Notes

The Brickmakers is an actual gastropub in Surrey:
http://www.thebrickmakerswindlesham.co.uk/

Here is the setlist of the following songs that was played on that date:

Some of what Adam said on stage are based on the exact words that he had said IRL on September 5th in Park Theater. https://hornet.com/stories/adam-lambert-freddie-mercury-two/
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

I've been getting sick quite a lot this month and I'm working on 3 stories at the same time, so I've been slow. So have something short here.

Freddie finds his living arrangement to be on the amusing side. It feels a little bit like he is back to the start before he earned his fame and fortune, but vastly different at the same time. Homeless but not without a place to stay. Penniless but not lacking of anything he needs.

Then again, considering that he is staying at the home of his very well off best friend, his living experience between then and now are vastly different. So he is fine with living the way he is in currently.

However, there is a side of him right now that is very upset, and it has something to do with the one hobby that he cultivated into a fine point in his previous life that never did die down and said hobby required him to be very well off.

All that he had done was to do a simple search for the auction houses that he used to frequent to like Christie's, Sotheby's, and Bonhams, only to get sucked into the allure of various beautiful and precious collections. To find out that these auction houses now have websites and display the upcoming collections of the rarest and expensive of antiques and jewellery and arts that he loves and aches to have is a huge mistake.

It is just… laying down on the sofa in the living room, Freddie makes an unhappy, frustrated noise at what he encountered from browsing online with his tablet.

A collection of Japanese antiques and paintings, which he can see about a dozen art pieces by Hiroshige available for bids online. Beautiful Chinese transmuted glazed vases. Wooden furniture made from mahogany dating back from the Georgian era. Persian rugs that reminds him of home and would not look out of place in his current bedroom.

Some can be bade online. The rest that he had seen are in different departments across the world that requires one to fly over to do bids.

Oh, how it pains and aches his heart to be able to see these beautiful, almost priceless items but unable to touch and certainly unable to afford them yet! He would have bought them all up in one fell swoop if he had the money to do so.

“Someday, you’ll be all mine,” Freddie whispers to himself, stroking lovingly at the tablet screen at a beautiful vase that dates back from centuries ago. He can already picture what sort of flowers would go well with the colour and design of the vase.

He is unaware of Anita standing at the doorway, phone in hand and staring at him with a confused and understandably freaked out face.
“So basically, Rule 34 is an Internet meme that means…”

“If it exists, there is porn of it. If there isn’t, there will be,” Corvo states.

“So what you’re saying is that with this ‘rule’, it means that there exists pornography about Queen?” Freddie says, looking somewhat weirded out as he absorbs the information. “Of me and my bandmates?”

Picturing the existence of porn videos where the actors look like them is… unsettling, to say the least.

“Yes, but it’s more along the lines of fanfiction and fanart than anything else you’re trying to picture. Which means there are people who write stories and create artworks of you and the members of Queen in… lewd situations, so to speak,” Corvo says, finding the right words to describe it. “It’s uncommon, but it’s there.”

When Haru told him how thirty percent of the Internet contains porn, it was weird to hear it at first and Freddie took it as some interesting trivia, but now that he recalls what that guitarist said it suddenly starts to make sense.

“It’s weird, Freddie, I know. I understand what you’re going through since I’ve been through that before when I first learned about it,” Corvo tries to explain. “It’s better to be told that this exists so that when you’re exploring the Internet, you know what to look out for and avoid it if you want to.”

“That’s good to know,” Freddie replies drily.

“And in case you wanted to ask, yes, there are gay fanfiction, which they usually call it as ‘slash fanfiction,’ about Queen which you can easily find online to read for free.”

Freddie cannot help but laugh when he hears that, as though it is the very straw that broke the camel’s back. An Internet ‘rule’ that states that there are porn versions of anything. People writing stories using him and his bandmates, even for gay stories that does not hide what its intention are for! And it’s free for anyone to read! The things that people do on the Internet in the century are more than enough to conclude that they are all weird in their own ways.

To think that once upon a time from decades ago, he and his bandmates were considered by MTV to have crossed the line for Body Language and crossdressing for a music video! He would love to see the faces of those executives who once told him how his own band was corrupting the youth and show them how their crusading efforts were all for naught!

Although admittedly, it is not a terrible thought to think about. Imagine him, screwing around with any one of his bandmates! Freddie is more than ready to admit that in their prime, they were pretty and handsome.

“So what do they write in these… fanfictions?” Freddie asks, trying to discern if he had used the correct plural noun for the word.

Corvo taps his chin. “If you want an example, there is a community that creates slash fanfiction about my band Orion, where the writers create stories depicting me and any one of my bandmates where
we… well, are attracted to each other and have sex. Or do some sort of making out or put us in a relationship together. Anything goes, really.”

Freddie giggles, finding it titillating and amusing. “It’s not hard to picture you with Link. Or with Till.”

“Till and I wouldn’t have worked out. Our personalities clash and we fight a lot,” Corvo says without hesitation, which sort of begs the question of how he would have known that unless they had that kind of discussion before. “But not all of it is about having sex. From what I have heard, there are some writers there who can create astonishingly amazing stories out of their imagination that can compete with novels on the market.”

“So if I were to go on Google and search Orion slash fanfiction right now…” Freddie quickly types in those words before Corvo can stop him. Time spent using his phone and tablet has made him a quick typist. “Oh! There’s already lots of results for me to peruse! From this website called Archive Of Our Own!”

Corvo looks at Freddie, exasperated. “Freddie, you don’t have to find it—just because I said it doesn’t mean—” In the end, he just sighs resignedly. “Just read it at your own risk.”

“Wow, I didn’t know so many writers pegged you to be the receiver,” Freddie giggles after browsing through the pages. There is even a tag just for the sole purpose of narrowing down and making it easier to find such stories! “Though I can’t blame them, it’s a nice position to be in,” he says salaciously.

“Do they have to make a tag for it?” Corvo mutters under his breath, shaking his head. He clears his throat. “That said, Freddie, not everyone likes it, especially for those who finds out about their own ones. They wouldn’t have reacted the same as I do.”

“Why not? It all seems harmless to me,” Freddie says, tearing his eyes away from his tablet to look at the Japanese singer.

“Creating fanfiction involves using characters from novels, TV shows, or movies and create their own stories, sometimes using the stories from those materials for it,” Corvo explains. “When there are fanfictions with real people involved like celebrities or musicians, however, things can get weird. Picture being treated like that, like some character in a story based on real life events that you’ve been through, add in the element of pairing you together with others that you consider as close friends of yours, and it won’t be hard to see why those who find out might get disgusted by it.”

When Corvo puts it that way, Freddie can see where that would lead. It is understandable at why some people would get upset by it. He was weirded out at first, but he does not see it as something bad and evil to exist.

“What’s your stance towards it? How does your band react to it?” Freddie asks. “From how you’ve been describing it to me, you don’t seem to have anything bad to say about it.”

“We let our fans from that community know that we’re aware of their existence and we’re fine with the content that they create so long as they respect that we’re not interested in knowing more about it.” Corvo gives a shrug. “Ultimately, in my eyes, the stuff that they created is harmless fun for themselves.”

“It seems you do reflect in a way that is positive that those writers and artists were able to capture it,”
Freddie says with a nod of understanding, graced with a soft smile.

“They do this out of sharing their creativity and using their own free time to write it and lets them have fun—” Corvo pauses, realising what Freddie just said and narrows his eyes. “You’re actually reading one of those stories right now, aren’t you?”

“I have to admit, you’re right in saying that they’re pretty good at writing their content which gives me some information that I’m dying to know about you,” Freddie’s smile turns into a smirk. “Can I see the beautiful tattoos on your back as described in these stories? Or maybe even your well-built body?” he asks, waggling his eyebrows.

Corvo stares him down, and gives his answer with a blunt, “No.”

“Not even an exclusive peep of you shirtless?” Freddie asks, eyes pleading.

“I’m afraid, Freddie, that you’ll have to search those pictures online like everyone else,” he replies with a satisfactory smirk.

Sometimes, no matter how good Freddie is at getting things his way, it is a good reminder that he cannot get it all.
Chapter 14

YouTube has an addictiveness for Freddie that is similar to when he first encountered Netflix, but on a much more dangerous level.

There are cat videos. So. Many. Cat videos.

When Anita is around, they would sit together and watch through various cat videos that just leaves them enamoured by the adorable felines. His favourite ones are made from a man from Russia who always posts one video per day of him feeding stray cats and sometimes helping kittens find forever homes.

It also hurts him to watch it, however, because it made him miss his own cats. Both from his previous life and from the Afterlife. He wondered if some of the cats that he had have in the oasis were his own cats that later joined him and he was unaware of it the whole time.

He had to remind himself that he has a reason to use YouTube for this time, and that is to find and listen to new music and artists to seek out for.

Freddie has spent a lot of his time catching up to new things, music very much included.

Haru had helped him set up a Spotify account that lets him listen to any music he wants for free. For free! Although after being interrupted by adverts one too many times just whenever he is about to get into the groove of the music, Freddie is more than ready to switch to a premium account and finally understand what the cost of the app being free means.

Spotify is for listening to whatever albums and songs that he wants. YouTube is more for seeing music videos that these bands and singers have made.

A huge part of why he does this is to find out what new music that there has been. By new, it means new to Freddie over the last 27 years that he had missed out due to his absence in the living world. To make it easier, he had asked his friends what their recommendations are, and they gave it to him. Their favourite choices are also a way for Freddie to see what their respective tastes for music are like.

It is interesting to have noted on how for the nine of his friends (Adam and Ed now included in) a few of them can recommend the same artists for him several times before each of them veered off into different paths. Some went for hard rock and metal. Some went for rap and hip-hop. Some went for classical and instrumentals. Some went for ballads and opera. Some went for soundtracks from movies and video games.

The funny thing that he had noticed is that none of the members of Orion had recommended their own band! Freddie thought that any one of the members could have done so when he asked for some music recommendations, but they did not. The only reasons that Freddie can chalk up to is that they are either all too humble to put their own band into the list, they all assume that one of them had already done so, or in trying to figure out what bands and artists will fit to Freddie’s tastes that they forgot to add themselves in as an option. No matter what reason it might be, Freddie listened to their songs as well and he can say that he definitely loves the operatic ballads that the band is very good at making.
What is also equally interesting is to observe how the nine of them all separately recommended a band called Muse to him without hesitation. It struck his curiosity enough to ask Brian and Roger on why they all recommended that band to him.

“Well, I thought it was obvious,” Brian says through the FaceTime call. “It’s sort of like if our band had a child with another band like U2 or Rage Against the Machine, then that’s the result.”

“I’d never imagine that we managed to spawn an actual successor of Queen,” Freddie says. He should know, because even back in the time when Queen was at its peak, they were also a tough act to follow for them to see if they had a spiritual successor of a sort.

“Well, turns out that we did,” Roger says with pride. “And they’re very good at making loud noises for being a trio!”

“Let’s hope that they’re as good as you’ve have all claimed then.”

“Freddie! How can say that?!” Roger suddenly scolds him.

“Pardon?” Freddie blinks, confused.

“How are you meant to be a responsible sibling to the child under our custody if you belittle them like that?” Roger admonishes him. Although from the faces of the guitarist and the drummer and how shaky the video got, they are trying very hard not to laugh.

“Well, it means I have to find out how good my adopted sibling is. Have a nice day, you two!” Freddie quickly ends the FaceTime call before they can pounce on him with more of those strange ‘dad jokes’. It must be an age thing for them to develop it. He has never recalled his own father developing this weird sense of humour.

After checking them out, watching from the oldest videos that Muse has up to the latest that they are releasing for their upcoming album, Freddie can honestly say that this particular choice made by his nine friends are pretty spot on. He can feel the elements of Queen that influenced several of their songs.

He had even checked on Corvo’s adorable boyfriend and what he has in his arsenal. From the videos that he had seen him perform on stage, Freddie must admit that should he meet up with Ed someday, he wants to advise him to dress up a little to not look like a busker that you can encounter playing on a street in any city in Britain. Yet from listening the songs that the ginger man has made and released, he can see the talent and ability that Ed possesses is what gave the reason for him to stand out and rise up in the first place.

Even though he is meant to search and discover new music, Freddie cannot help but search for the music from his days, which meant the bands and artists that he loved in his youth and the very songs that his own band have created. Which is how he stumbled upon the tribute concert that came a year after his death.

Finding the full version of the live show was not very easy, even with fans that doggedly put it on every time the website tries to take it down. The ones that claimed to be the full version is severely edited to make for an imperfect viewing or can go on for so long that it could eat up nearly a quarter of his time spent awake. So Freddie opted to watch it in segments. It is easier to find and conveniently titled to know which artist and what songs are played.
There were a lot of artists invited to participate for his tribute concert, and they all sang magnificently in their own way in playing their own songs and covering well-known Queen songs. So many friends and acquaintances making their appearance to show their honour and respect for Queen, and especially the legendary frontman of the band.

There is a bittersweet feeling when he watches the videos with George Michael in it. Freddie knew what happened to him due to the comments and from checking Wikipedia to verify it. To think that the singer is now gone when only two decades ago, he was singing ‘Somebody to Love’ at its best rendition in a tribute concert dedicated to Freddie himself.

It is all but a reminder for Freddie that the people he once knew - even several of the ones that had appeared at the tribute show - are slowly disappearing off one by one, with some of them being in his eyes, too young to leave this world. Freddie is the living proof that he is able to return, so why have the others have not done the same yet? Is he the only one that is known?

He shakes himself off from that dark thought and concludes that he will watch the tribute concert at another day, at another time. There are more videos to watch anyways.

There has been one thing that Freddie watches a lot for the past few days, almost as much as the amount of times he watches cat videos.

Ever since the livestream the other day, Freddie has not forgotten of what he had seen. He still finds himself humming along to the song, can still hear the crowd in his head singing it by heart and the cheers accompanied with it. Most of all, he remembers how Brian looked when he performed it.

He watches several versions of the same song performed by Brian and his acoustic guitar over the years. From when his hair was still brown until it eventually turns into the white hair that Freddie sees these days. He watches it all the same, focusing on Brian and the way he looks while playing the song.

Many of the videos that he had watched for this song performed live are a lot different than the livestream that he saw. In the livestream, even though he looks like he wants to cry, Brian looks so much happier and the tears he had shed are more out of joy, as though the song does not hurt him anymore and only a few truly knew why. It is a visual stark contrast between what Freddie had seen from the livestream and to the others that he has watched on YouTube.

“You’re too brave and strong of a man, Brian May,” Freddie mutters to himself.

Both Brian and Roger are really brave and strong to have chosen to continue on as Queen, but especially Brian to be able to play ‘Love Of My Life’ by himself on stage for so many years. He played it despite knowing the significance of the song had changed dramatically following Freddie’s death. He played it even though it meant seeing a video of Freddie that will come on later every time, and it would be a bittersweet time for Brian and for some of the audience.

There is one video shot by a fan last year where they have filmed Brian up close from the side, turning around and his face seen by the camera to look at the large screen behind him with a sad smile on his face, his arm stretched out as if wanting to grasp someone’s hand but unable to.

That scene struck something within Freddie and it tugs at his heartstrings that it almost threatened to break it.

Yet, at the same time, it gives Freddie a purpose. A wish to fulfill.
Freddie is determined that he will get back on stage with Queen someday, so that when ‘Love Of My Life’ is sung, he will be there to sing it for real. He will grasp back Brian’s hand for real and it will not just be a video recording of himself doing that. That bittersweet moment shall be more sweet than bitter by the end.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year, everyone!

Freddie is finding John Deacon to be still so elusive since his return.

He is, as the young people will say in this day and age on the Internet, a real life cryptid. Which when one considers what that word means, is a pretty accurate meaning to put on John. Freddie could also call him the grand champion of hide and seek in Britain, but that is too long of a title to give to Deacy.

Although Freddie does wishes that the retired bassist can hurry up already and just come and see for himself that he is really back, at the same time he does not want to be like a persistent ghost that wants to force him to find him right now. If anything, knowing John, it might only serve to drive him away.

Brian and Roger have said that Freddie’s death had been devastating to them all, but John is especially mentally fragile due to having possibly not been able to move on from it and the illusion of normalcy is what is keeping him from meeting Freddie yet. Even then, they have said that they are only speculating on why John has yet to come see him.

So Freddie is doing his best to tread carefully through the eggshells scattered on the floor surrounding John. In a way, John is still the youngest person in the band that Freddie wants to protect him from the cruelty of mankind and look after him, even from afar.

Still, it does not mean that Freddie wants to be completely locked out of John’s life.

Ever since he was introduced to email and taught how to send electronic letters, Freddie has been writing letters and sending it to the bassist after Brian gave him John’s email address. He writes an electronic letter to him everyday, without fail, describing what he has been doing and learning.

The concept of instant communication is not strange to him. You can send a message instantaneously to the recipient, which is something that Freddie loves as it is easy to do it in this time, yet you still have to wait for what seems like forever for a reply. No matter how the advent and improvements of technology has made communications instantaneous and cheaper and more accessible to do so, some things never change.

So far, since he sent his first email to John, he has yet to receive a reply back from the bassist.

Some days, Freddie sends his letters with pictures of what he had taken attached to it. Some of the photos he had taken depicts what he has been doing, like watching TV or exploring Brian’s house. Once, he had even taken a picture of Corvo when the singer was not looking just so that John can know who his new friend that he mentioned on the letter is.

Most of the pictures that Freddie had taken are of himself. Taking selfies from a phone is much easier
to do than with the old cameras of his previous life, so John can know what he currently looks like and the results are much, much prettier to look at too.

There are also some days that with the proverbial radio silence coming from John that makes Freddie worry that his messages are not received by the bassist. So each time Freddie creates a new mail, he had to make sure that he has indeed gotten the correct email address before he starts writing.

After finishing his typing, he signs off his letter as the same since he first started it to give it consistency:

Your best friend, Freddie Mercury

Today, he has a special one for John to see. It took some help to get it done, as it required some instructions and time to upload it, but it might bring a smile to John’s face.

John Deacon finds himself content with what he has at his age. He has his family. He does not have to worry about finances. He has grandchildren that he always look forward to when they come around to his home.

The one thing that disrupts his contentedness of life is what sounds like something that he had never thought would happen in his lifetime. He has Freddie again.

It is still an unbelievable thought to wrap around his head that Freddie is back, alive and well. When John received that call from Brian that fateful day, he had wanted to refute the guitarist’s claims and partly worried that Brian may have started to go senile. When Brian and then Roger kept insisting that it must be real, John is ashamed to admit that he had thought that it must be all a cruel trick orchestrated solely to target him.

But then a call from someone named Corvo who had been performing on that very day in Reading Festival told him that, no, they were not lying, Brian and Roger were telling the truth the whole time because he was the first one to have seen and confirmed that it was indeed Freddie and he was the one who contacted Brian and Roger in order to help Freddie be reunited with his old friends.

Although relieved that it is real and neither of his oldest friends have gotten afflicted by what can come with old age, John did not agree to go that day partly due to the fact that his eldest son had brought his family to come over and visit, and partly because he was not ready to face Freddie yet.

Days later, Brian sends him photos of a young Persian man in plain clothes at his house in Surrey. One picture is of the Persian man smiling, but showing only his lips. The other shows a toothy smile that prominently shows his overbite. It is the type of smile that Freddie only shows when he is around close friends that he is comfortable with. In truth, John did not have to see the teeth to know that the young man in the pictures is Freddie. Alive and youthful and very much happy to be back.

For the first time in a long while, John has tears in his eyes, overwhelmed by his emotions in seeing that one of his best friend is alive again.

Still, John did not call back or wanted to rush towards Surrey to meet Freddie and his old bandmates. If this had happened decades ago, after seeing the physical evidence, he would not have hesitated to get into his car and drive straight down to Windlesham. Now something holds him back.
If someone hears it out for his reasons why he is holding back from wanting to do it so badly, they would have said that he is silly for thinking about it too much. But to his eyes, his concerns still feel legitimate. Will Freddie be really happy to see him again? What if his reunion with Freddie will not be as good as the one Brian and Roger got? Will Freddie remember when he did not come visit him those last few days before he left the mortal world and John must explain that it is because he could not stand the sight of his best friend dying in front of his very eyes?

For all that John worries and frets and delays himself, it is turning all into naught as Freddie seems to have taken the matter into his own hands.

It did not came in the form of Freddie physically appearing at the front door of his house. Rather, it came in the form of an email.

Every day for the past week, at around the evening, John receives an email from Freddie, telling him about his day and what he had learned. Of his new friends and whatever that caught his interest.

A part of John wants to be in denial, that this Freddie is probably an imposter that will manipulate him. On the other hand, he genuinely believes that it is Freddie because the selfie pictures that he had attached more than shows that it is the same man from the pictures that he had received from Brian and the singer who is indeed staying at Brian’s Surrey estate and being looked after by Brian’s wife Anita.

John keeps Freddie’s emails at a folder away from the rest of what he receives in his inbox. Some days, like this evening right now, he rereads those emails, from the earliest to the most current one that Freddie had sent. In a way, even though he has been reluctant to physically meet Freddie yet, Freddie wants to make sure that John can keep up with what he has been doing.

Today’s email is unusual. This time, there seems to be a video attached to it. It took some time for him to download it, but once he got it, John opens a video player application and receives a huge surprise to see that the video starts with Freddie in it.

“Hello, John. It’s me, Freddie.”

John stares at his computer, mouth agape. It is real. It is really him, in high definition and so recognisable in a way that once upon a time, only his own memories can paint his image much better than photos and videos.

“I only recently learned that you can actually send a video file by email. So this is my first video message to you, darling.”

“I’ve hoped that I got your email address correct. I’ve asked Brian for it and double-checked it several times to be sure that I got it right.”

“You got the right email, Freddie,” John replies to no one else present in the living room.

“I don’t fully know why you might not want to meet me yet, John, but I understand,” Freddie says. “Reunions can be frightening and worrying for me too. When I was still in the Afterlife, I didn’t think about how I will be able to contact any of my friends, let alone find you all. All I wanted and focused on was to be able to really return to the mortal world to meet you all and return to the mothership.”
Freddie then smiles wryly. “It only hit me once I’ve arrived here and suddenly I wasn’t so sure. I have nothing but the clothes on my back that somehow was made for me, and I had no way of being able to find and contact any of you. I was incredibly lucky that I met Corvo and the rest of Orion. I really can’t blame you if you’re nervous of seeing me again. Even I was nervous about seeing Brian and Roger again. Even… Mary.”

John raises an eyebrow. He does not know why Freddie pauses before saying her name, but it seems as if he did not have a good reunion with her. It is one of his worst case scenarios that he would get the same treatment that Mary did.

“I really do want to see you again soon, John. I’ve missed you. It’s hard to believe that you and Brian and Roger and so many of the people that I’ve known have grown old. Or have been… gone for years now.”

Hearing that is like a punch to the face, a reminder to John that like his bandmates and Veronica, he is getting older. And for someone like Freddie who has returned to the living world looking more than a decade younger than the last year of his previous life, he would not know how long the people he once knew would have left to live. John can now see that meeting Freddie again is not just for his own sake, but also for Freddie who would now not only live a lot longer, but more than likely to now outlive all of his old friends.

“In the meantime, I’ve actually haven’t been doing much, since I can’t travel over to France or go down to the pub for a pint because I don’t have a passport or ID to identify myself. But those are frivolous details, dear,” Freddie says with a roll of his eyes and a dismissive wave of hand. “I’ve been learning to use gadgets in this century which are a lot easier to use than what we had back in the day, so I’ve taken efforts to learn how to use it.”

John does believe Freddie’s words that he has been learning to adapt to modern technology, if the selfies that John had received from him that were included into his emails counted. The video that he had taken to send to John does show that he is learning, nonetheless.

“So without any chance of adding his own word in or whatsoever, John receives an impromptu tour around Brian’s house in Surrey, courtesy of Freddie. He gives a guided tour from Brian’s small studio and office room where he keeps his research papers and telescopes, to the bedroom that is provided to for Freddie. John is also given a short tour of Brian’s back garden, where there are wild hedgehogs that Brian gives shelter to and which Freddie does admit that the spiky little creatures are cute.

As the video continues, John is starting to notice that his cheeks feel strained and tired. Only then does he realised that that is because he has been smiling the whole time.

Once the impromptu tour is finished, John sees Freddie’s face on the screen once more.

“If you’re ready to see me, Deacy, give a ring to me or Brian or Roger beforehand so that I know,” Freddie says with a warm smile. “I really want to see us all together again.”

The video comes to its end and the living room is silent other than John’s loud sniffles, which caught
his wife’s attention to come see what was the matter with him.

“John, what’s the matter?” Veronica asks, concerned. She approaches him to touch his cheek. “Are you alright? You’ve looked as if you’ve seen a ghost.”

“He’s not a ghost,” John says, his voice merely above a whisper. He looks up at his wife with a smile. “It’s him, Veronica. It really is him.”

John repeats the video several times, from start to end. For his wife to watch the whole thing first and causing her to cry in surprise and joy next to her husband, and then mostly for himself to rewatch it because he wanted to. It gets a smile on John’s face to slowly get himself familiarised with Freddie once more, even if it is by an indirect way.

And, most importantly, to now know that he has nothing to be afraid of or worry when he chooses to make his appearance once more.

After finishing watching the video, he clicks on reply and starts to type in a few words.

Freddie had just finished watching a Netflix series that he had taken interest of when he notices that he had received a new email. From John! Quickly, he goes to his inbox to check what John’s first reply is.

_I’ve missed you too, Freddie. I promise I’ll come see you soon. And I’ll call beforehand. -John_

The reply is short and straight to the point, so much like John and it brings a smile to Freddie’s face. He has finally gotten John to start coming out of his shell.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the late update! Been busy since the start of the year and this chapter and the next one is quite hard to write through. Now, while Freddie's return means that this is an AU, this story is already an AU before Freddie made his return. Can you figure out what I made different about this story's world before I post the next chapter? ;)

There were times that Freddie remembers when he was content with being in the Afterlife in his time spent there. Where he can idle and relax and was free from whatever worries that he once had. Free from pain and exhaustion and tending to bodily needs. He does not try to hide that he does misses several aspects of what he had in the Afterlife, but it does not compare to what he had missed more of what he had when he was alive.

Since coming back, it only solidified the proof that he really does prefer the being in the living world over the Afterlife.

While he did missed being able to create music and perform -it was his life and blood and career for more than half of his life- it is the little things that he used to take for granted when he was alive in his previous life that he missed the most.

For example, taking a relaxing bubble bath and listening to music in the morning.

The things around him have stayed the same, but have changed a lot in appearance.

Bathing is now more interesting and exciting. He remembers that fizzy, bubbling ball of soap from Corvo's house that fascinated him and wants to find out what that is and unfortunately, he has yet to know what it is called. The best that he can come up with is fizzy soap ball. Still, nothing beats a good old fashioned bubble bath using a liquid bath gel.

Playing music in the bathroom is less of a hassle now, too, thanks to a bluetooth speaker that was a birthday gift from the drummer of Orion. It is light, portable, has great audio, and most importantly, waterproof. He can just pick whatever song he wants to be played with just a few taps to his tablet that is encased in a waterproof case.

If anyone were to listen to him to sing in the bath, who is to stop him and his enjoyment? The acoustics in the bathroom is amazing and the singer he is singing along with is amazing.

“Baby, I have no story to be told. But I’ve heard one on you, and I’m gonna make your head burn. Think of me in the depths of your despair. Make a home down there, as mine sure won’t be shared.”

And, of course, his own voice is amazing and complement very well with the other singer’s voice.

Not wanting to soak himself in the water any longer and get wrinkles on his hands and feet, Freddie finishes up his bath and stops the music.
Moments later, when he is about to pick up a towel he can hear the door knocking.

“Wait for a moment!” Quickly, he dries himself before putting on a pair of underwear and a bathrobe. “I’m decent now, you can come in, dear!” he says, coming out of the bathroom just as he finishes tying up the belt around his waist.

He is pleasantly surprised to see Corvo to enter his bedroom. It is a first to have Corvo come here so early in the morning. Usually, unless there is a special event, he comes around the afternoon to spend time with Freddie.

“Have you been singing along to an Adele song?” Corvo asks.

“Yes, she’s got amazing vocals,” Freddie sighs appreciatively. “I love her songs and her voice. I want to do a duet with her someday.”

“After listening to you sing, I admit that you would make a good duet with her.”

“Correction, I would make an amazing duet with her,” Freddie says. “So why are you here so early in the morning, Corvo?” he asks, sitting down on the bed.

“It’s out of a very important reason.” Corvo clears his throat. “First of all, I want to apologize that I haven’t told this to you until now, but I’ve been keeping in contact with Brian, Roger, and our lawyers this whole time to figure out how to deal with the elephant in the room.”

“Which is?” Freddie raises an eyebrow, his gut feeling suspecting of where this might be going.

“Your legal status, Freddie,” Corvo clarifies. “It’s something that I’ve been discussing and trying to figure out with Brian and Roger. No matter how you look at it, by all accounts, you’re a dead man whose body is confirmed to be cremated and somehow, you came back to life.”

Freddie gives a hum and a nod. Truthfully, even after his suspicion is confirmed, Freddie is surprised. He was not surprised about what Corvo just told him, as he has been discussing this topic with Brian and Roger over video calls about what to do with his legal status and citizenship due to the complications and technicality that he is, by all accounts, considered dead. What he is surprised is that they have gotten Corvo involved in it as well, so he certainly did not expect that his new friend will come to help him with it.

“I didn’t expect that Brian and Roger would sought you out to help along with this problem.”

“I didn’t expect it as well,” Corvo confesses. “But I did offer that I can help for anything. And, well, I do like a challenge from time to time to see how it can be solved.”

Freddie tries to imagine if there is anyone who would see his situation as a challenge in figuring out how to solve it. The only few that he can think of are either scientists or writers.

“It’s been a topic that I’ve been trying to figure out with them too,” he says instead. “I thought this would all start to be worked on when they come back from Las Vegas.”

“I’m the one with the free time, so I might as well see what I can do to help,” Corvo says with a shrug.

“So you have figured out what I’ll have to go through?”
“Yes,” the Japanese singer confirms with a confident nod. “While you were taking your time to adjust to the modern world, I’ve been doing the backbreaking work of getting what you need and prepare to get you back on your feet legally.”

“That is to say that you didn’t do much, did you darling?”

“I did part of it, but I hired a private investigator to do most of the work of finding any documents and records with you in it,” Corvo says, confirming what Freddie said. After a long pause, he looks at Freddie and speaks to him softly. “I also contacted Mary Austin during that time.”

Hearing that, Freddie bites his lips, saying nothing. He had not talked to her since that day. He does not hold a lot of hatred or animosity at her because she has been his friend for many years, but nevertheless he was angry and upset at what she had done, that was for sure. For now, he finds that he does not want to be in contact with her until further notice.

“Is it necessary to find her though?” he asks quietly.

“It is in order to ask to check if your ashes are present,” Corvo answers. He pursed his lips. “Look, Freddie, there was an important reason behind why I’ve had to asked to see your remains and it was to confirm a hypothesis in my head. No one, not even your own family, knows where your remains are. She is the only one who does know.”

Freddie did not particularly care of what will happen to his original body, partly because he did not want people outside of his inner circle to see his corpse that was ravaged by a horrible virus and partly because he preferred cremation. Although he was not as religious as his parents were, he was raised up being taught of Zoroastrianism and to him, it made more sense that his friends and family and fans would remember him by his spirit and legacy than by a grave.

Although, judging by the statue of himself that was erected in Montreux, he can see that despite his thoughts and opinions, there are people who do need physical symbols in order to have somewhere to go to mourn and remember him.

Though now that Corvo mentioned his cremated remains, Freddie cannot avoid the morbid thought of the possibility that he was resurrected using those ashes and bone fragments. Could the urn have been emptied out through some unknown means as his remains are used up to form part of his body back? It is a freakish idea to think of.

“Was it found?”

Corvo nods. “Yes, she led me to the location days ago. The ashes are present as she had remembered and the evidence confirms that you are in an entirely new body.”

Freddie lets out a sigh of relief. “That’s… that’s good.”

“Which presents us with a new problem.”

Freddie looks at Corvo with an eyebrow raised. The way Corvo said it tells Freddie that he is treating this new problem seriously.

“What’s the new problem?” he asks, wary.
“It’s a new body. We don’t know if something is different about it.”

Freddie blinks. “That’s it? I’ve pretty much already proven to you all that I am who I am.”

“You did, and I don’t doubt it. But skeptics will remain skeptics unless we have documented proof that you’re not a pretender. Without proof, they would think that you’re someone impersonating Freddie Mercury, taking advantage of poor Brian and Roger.”

“I wouldn’t do that to them!” Freddie exclaims, offended by such a notion.

Corvo quickly puts his hands up. “I know you won’t. You’re still you, Freddie, no one can deny that. What we don’t know is if this new body of yours that the godly beings from the Afterlife gave you is the same copy as your previous one. You may be recognisable, physically and in personality, but the genetic code and structure of this current body that you are housed in might be different from your original body.”

“English, please?” Freddie requests.

“Your old and new body may look the same but we don’t know if they are exactly the same,” Corvo explains in a more concise manner. “For all we know, your new body might not have the same fingerprints as your previous body. It’s why I arrived here so early. I want to take you to a clinic in London to get you examined and get some verification.”

Freddie did not expect that his morning would start off with a visit to the doctor. He had sort of expected his day to be more of lounging around in the house, talk and have tea with Anita, watch TV, surf the Internet, take a nap, write emails for John, play with the piano in Brian’s studio room, chat with Brian and Roger over video calls. In other words, much to Freddie’s horrible realisation, it is a routine that he had set up to pass the time. Maybe doing something different today is not so bad of an idea.

“What sort of clinic will it be?”

“A DNA clinic. If there’s one way to be sure if your new body is identical to your old one, this is a guaranteed one.” Corvo pulls out a large brown envelope out of his messenger bag and hands it over to Freddie. “Almost forgot. You’ll need this.”

Taking the envelope, Freddie wonders what is inside it. It looks thin and feels light in his hands.

“What’s in here?”

“Forged documents and an ID card with a fake alias,” Corvo answers. “Until we can get you officially confirmed to be back from the dead, these will temporarily have to work for now while we get things rolling. You’ll need it when you’re getting registered for the clinic. You can also use it if you want to go outside to go to a pub or wherever you wish to go to. Under supervision, of course.”

“Do I need to do this so soon?” Freddie asks. The other part of Freddie wants to ask how Corvo obtained said forged documents and ID card to be made for him.

“I believe that it’s better to start early. We’re going to use this time to build up concrete evidence that when the time comes for it, no one can dispute that you’re really back.”

Freddie cannot help but be impressed. His friend is well-prepared and seems to have figured out the
keys toward solving the challenge that Freddie has ahead of him. If he does finally get legally declared alive again, maybe he will finally get to do a lot of things that he had been missing out. The little things such as going outside. Travel to places. And, daresay, shopping.

There is something else that is also disturbing him. Namely, the sketchy stuff that his new friend seems to do on the sidelines.

“I want to ask you a question, Corvo.”

“What is it?”

“Are you actually a musician? Or something more?”

Corvo’s response is to give a tight lipped grin.

“I know what you’re thinking, Freddie, but I very rarely do something like this. Brian and Roger have asked me to help them, and I’m doing this for you to help get you get back on your feet again. It’ll be easier to get around once it’s been dealt with and we can do it before you and your friends can decide on the announcement date.”

It seems as though there are not many secrets between them. The official announcement has been a topic that he had been in discussion about with Brian, Roger, and only recently, John. They know that sooner or later, no matter how they will try their best to hide it, the secret will eventually come out. Freddie is of the opinion that it is best to get it out of the way by doing an official announcement, which Roger agreed as well. Brian and then John were the more reluctant ones, but they do understand Freddie’s point and have agreed to it in the end. If they do the announcement, that way they have the control of how Freddie will reveal his existence to the world. The only things they have not settled out yet is when to do the announcement and whether or not John wants to be there with them for it.

“Dress up, get some breakfast, and we’ll be off for the clinic. I got you some new clothes before I came here,” Corvo says, pointing to a paper shopping bag that he has placed next to Freddie’s bed. “And once we’re done at the clinic, if you want to, I can bring you over to my house to see my cats.”

Hearing that perks Freddie up and he takes the new clothes and goes about to start dressing himself up. His routine is getting somewhat of a bore to do on a day to day basis anyway.

The clinic visit is not dramatic, which is a good thing. Registration is relatively quick and straightforward. The lady manning the front desk barely even blinked an eye at Freddie. She simply took one look at him and then at the fake name on his ID and did not even register anything else other than to put some information into the computer. Considering how Freddie is used to people recognising him, he finds this experience somewhat refreshing and that it is actually easier to move around in public without any disguises on than he had thought.

It is a reminder of the changes that has happened for the last 27 years that he had not been alive and one of the perks of having been dead for that long is that it is more than sufficient time for people to not remember his appearance. There is a morbid and dark joke that Freddie has at the back of his mind, but he decides against saying said joke out loud.
It is only when they meet the doctor that Corvo is able to give a more thorough explanation to the doctor of who ‘Darius Khansari’ really is. After getting through the shock and a bit of a starry-eyed moment, the doctor gets on with it and is calm and professional towards Freddie.

To prove that he is who he is with the method that Corvo wants to use, samples were acquired from Freddie. Saliva, blood, a bit of dead skin, fingerprints, and some hair and fingernail clippings.

For good measure, the doctor even did a health check, but this is more under Freddie’s request. Just because he feels healthy does not mean that there is not any dormant disease hiding around in his body.

Before he even knew it, they are done and in Corvo’s car. The front desk lady said that it will take a few weeks before they can pick up the results. Even though the clinic visit was a straightforward affair, a part of Freddie feels worried, which got Corvo’s notice.

“What’s bothering you?”

“Thinking about what you said this morning,” Freddie answers. “I know that I’m me, but I came back in a whole new body, like you said. Will it have anything to prove that I’m… I’m Freddie Mercury? Much less Farrokh Bulsara?”

It has been a long time since he uttered out his original given name. Freddie does not always show the shy, more vulnerable side of himself, but at the moment, inside the car with someone that he considers a friend that he can trust, he needs a sort of assurance that things will go alright.

“You don’t worry about it, Freddie,” Corvo says with a quiet, assuring voice. “At the end of the day, no matter what the results might be, you’re still you. That’s what matters for all of us.”

Freddie nods, relieved to know that no matter what will happen, he has his friends who will look out for him.

“As for your other question, I got you covered for that. The private investigator that I’d hired was meticulous in combing up information and evidence related to you. They also obtained copies of medical records of your parents and even from your sister Kashmira’s medical records for references that I’ve given to the doctor so that it can help them analyse and compare, just in case.”

Freddie pauses, blinks, and turns to Corvo. “Does Kash know you’ve gotten those files?” he asks.

“Nope.”

“Then how did you get a private investigator who can get all those medical records of my family?” Freddie inquires, eyes narrowed in suspicion at him.

“I have my ways,” Corvo replies, keeping vague in a tone that hints to Freddie that it is for the better that the less is said of how it was all done.

Deciding against wanting to ask more questions, Freddie instead decides to focus on looking forward to seeing Corvo’s cats and take pictures with them, especially the Norwegian Forest cat that he has.
The report did not have to take weeks to be obtained as was claimed. It is only a week later when Corvo arrives with the results in his hands. Freddie suspects that he must have paid a lot of money to get it done quickly as a priority and paid just enough to the clinic that they stay discreet about the matter.

Still, what matters is that the results are now here. The wait has been long enough as it is and Freddie is excited.

“Let me see! Let me see!”

Freddie snatches the large envelope off of Corvo’s hands. Quickly, he opens the envelope and reads the file. There is silence as he flips through the pages, frowns, and hands it over to Corvo.

“Can you read it? I don’t know how to read this,” he says.

Corvo has the decency to not roll his eyes at him when he takes the file and reads it over. He makes a few hums here and there as he reads it before he gives the verdict.

“The tests now proves it without a doubt. You’re one hundred percent Freddie Mercury, both in mind and in body.”

Hearing that is a huge relief for Freddie. Prior to the clinic visit, the authenticity of his own self is not something that Freddie had realised that he would worry until Corvo told him of it. Now, he will not have to worry about anyone calling him a fake or impersonator. If they do, he will have proof that he is more than happy to shove it to their faces.

“I’m healthy and I’m one hundred percent myself! I never thought this can be so worrying,” Freddie says.

“Now that we have irrefutable proof that you’re real and alive, next in the agenda is to register and establish to the government that you’re a legal citizen to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.”

Freddie turns to Corvo, channeling the neutral face that he had seen Deacy been naturally good at making for so many years.

“Is this why you have bought along a huddle of lawyers behind you today? And why do we need that many?”

“I’m impressed that you know one of the correct collective nouns of a group of lawyers,” Corvo says with a slight hint of praise under his voice. “And to answer your second question, they each have a specific purpose that can help you should there be some problems that we might encounter. Better to have precautionary measures than none at all at we’re going to face next.”

In other words, today Freddie will be dealing with paperwork and lawyers.
I find that I'm making this part far too long that it's easier to split it up again in order to make it easier to take the story in. Also, it seems that no one has figured out what is making this world different from ours yet. But don't worry, you still got time to guess what's different about this AU before the next chapter gives the reveal!

Freddie feels overwhelmed.

Usually, when being told that what is about to do is considered the impossible, Freddie either stubbornly pushes on to overcome it or eventually relents for more sensible solutions after being given the cold hard facts and the terrible consequences that awaits him. For this situation that he is in, he has yet to figure out whether to place it on the former or latter category.

The lawyers, after getting through their shock of meeting Freddie, have all sat down in the dining room acting as a meeting room and started asking questions about Freddie’s life history, of where he was born, where he studied, and how he and his family ended up in England. Corvo is able to cover parts of what Freddie said with some historical events that Freddie was a part of.

In recalling and telling his story to the people present in the room and provided with historical events that actually happened that affected his life, it reminded Freddie just how lucky he and his family were that his father Bomi possessed a British passport and the foresight to get the family to escape Zanzibar for London before what is now called the Zanzibar Revolution went to full swing.

If his father had been later in his decision to leave, Freddie shudders in thinking about it, they would have ended up like the unfortunate ones, killed as part of the twenty thousand victims in the massacre. Freddie would have been dead before the idea of Queen would even exist. There are reasons that that part of his life story is rarely brought up to be told, and this is one of them.

After finishing the interview, the lawyers inform him that they have been studying the case towards helping their client before they have even met him, thanks to the documents that Corvo had provided to them. When one of the lawyers starts to explain what he might have to go through, as Freddie listens on he feels like he is way out of the league and unsure of how he can go through it.

Considering that the circumstances of his situation is not something that people have prepared for, there were not any laws to work this out of. The best that they can do is to find and study what existing laws that Britain has that can be even a bit helpful for Freddie’s case.

One of the lawyers whose expertise is on human rights tries to assure him by pointing out that the chances of Freddie regaining his citizenship will be relatively straightforward since his parents have British citizenship. But then a lawyer who specialises in naturalisation laws intervenes and claims that it might not be as easy as it sounds. A missing person once thought dead for years eventually popping back into civilisation is one thing, but a person who has been confirmed dead for many years with physical evidence provided is another one altogether.
Slowly but surely, things went downhill for Freddie. Words get jumbled and he is at a loss in struggling to understand and keeping up with the conversation that is going on. The lawyers and Corvo seems to have barely noticed that Freddie had gone quiet as they continued on their discussion.

Eventually, when he saw that the lawyers are distracted on arguing about a particular sentence written on the papers on whether or not it is a loophole that can be taken advantage of, he took the opportunity to stand up and leave the room, opting to go lie down on a sofa in the living room, which is where he currently is. He did not care if they see him suddenly leave the room and be acting like this. He needed to step aside to get some air to breathe and somewhere to be alone to comprehend what he will have to face.

Some time later, Corvo arrives at the living room, looking down at Freddie in concern. He must have requested a break time from the meeting in order to come check in on him.

“Are you alright, Freddie?”

“I’m fine, darling. Just after hearing what I’ll have to go through,” Freddie sighs, shaking his head. “It’ll take me years to have my life back.”

This is one of his worries. It will be years before he can even get back on the stage to sing. Those are potential years wasted on his case when the time would have been better spent on doing things that really mattered to him.

“It’s not as bad as it sounds,” Corvo says, as if trying to convince Freddie that what he said is true. “It wouldn’t take years like you’ve claimed. That’s for the ones going through naturalisation of becoming a British citizen. You won’t be put through that particular hassle, Freddie, because you already are a British citizen. Yours is a unique case that calls for expert help for a reason in the first place.”

“Doesn’t sound so unique from what they’ve been saying,” Freddie grumbles.

“Freddie, your situation is unique, you can’t deny that. They’re just trying to figure out what are the likely routes that the government will take on dealing with your case. Even sorting through what we need to find, yours will be somewhat easier to handle since you were born and died as a British citizen, so the government has to handle it whether they like it or not.”

“Do we have to do this all right now?” Freddie asks. “Hearing what they’ve said, it sounds too complicated to get this all accomplished. It’s already hard enough to even read the fine print from what I’ve seen.”

Corvo stays silent, his mind busy in thought before he gives a nod. “I understand. It’s pretty stressful to go through this process. We can put it off at a later date but if you still want me involved in it, I’m afraid it’ll be only when I’m available, especially around this time of the year.”

“Why?” Freddie asks, raising his head up from the arm of the sofa to look at Corvo at a better position. “You got plans?”

“Yeah, September has actually been my band’s break time. I’m going to be pretty busy soon come October and November,” Corvo explains. “Touring for a couple of months with a bit of studio recording here and there. And I’m also planning to go on a holiday with Ed after Christmas.”
Even though Freddie knows that it has been only a few weeks since he came back, it can be easy to forget that he had arrived at the end of August and how fast time can pass by. So many things have happened in that short span of time. Soon enough, Roger and Brian will be back from Las Vegas.

“I’m not sure if it’s going to be hard to get things done at a later time, but don’t worry about it. I get why you need some time to get a break from this. I’m sure Brian and Roger can help you with this!” Corvo continues talking with too much reassurance that gives Freddie an awful suspicion that Corvo is putting him through a spell of reverse psychology.

“We’ll just go through the discussion for today and put the case off at a later time to deal with. I’m sure that you can wait for doing tours and singing duets with Adele at a much later date, right?”

That seems to snap Freddie out of his doubt and misery. The thought of having to wait at a later time to get things accomplished and spending even more time with his life in limbo is what gets Freddie quickly get on his feet and march back to the room. Opening the door with a dramatic swing, he puts his hands to his hips, looking at the lawyers with a confident posture.

“Why are you all sitting there and gawking at me? Let’s get down to business and have me declared as a British citizen once more as soon as possible, darlings!”

This time around, Freddie is more focused and progress moves on more smoothly.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

First of all, thank you to all you readers for helping me reach 7k in hits!

Second, I also want to thank you all for letting me witness that this story has reached and pass through... 6969 hits (⁶⁹ sixty-nine)

For those who haven’t figured out the question that I’ve asked since Chapter 16, worry no more! The answer that you seek is at the very end of this chapter!

“So we’ve shocked the doctors and nurses, and next in the agenda is to bring a shock to the government?” Freddie asks Corvo. It does not feel like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire so much as it is more jumping right into the molten hot oils of a deep fryer.

“As much as the government hates getting surprises, they’d rather be the ones to know it first before the public knows,” Corvo says. “If you’re not sure what to say, I’ll cover for you to do the talking.”

“I haven’t figured out what to actually say since they keep moving us around,” Freddie grumbles.

The lawyers have made sure that they have read through the documents and helped him in getting his application form completed and signed at the appropriate places before being submitted by express mail to the Home Office. It should have been a straightforward path from there. Instead, a couple of days later, Freddie received a letter from the government that was essentially a summon for him to appear at the Home Office. After informing Corvo about it, the Japanese singer appeared as early as possible in Windlesham the very next day, with a fresh set of clothes for Freddie and only one lawyer in tow this time around.

Now here they are, at the Home Office in the heart of London. It feels like they have are playing a bizarre game of musical chairs as they have been moving to different rooms ever since they have arrived here. Every time one of the civil servants in charge reads the file that was handed over for them, they would do a double take, look up at Freddie and then back down at the file before getting up from their desk to disappear for a few minutes before finally coming back to inform them that they are to meet someone higher up. So far, it has happened three times now for Freddie to pick up the pattern.

“It seems that word has spread through the grapevines very quickly here,” Corvo noted.

It was not hard for Freddie to notice the attention that they have received. He imagines that they must have been a hell of a sight to see for those people present in the building. Two rockstars strutting through the hallways of the Home Office, their lawyer never straying far from them, and one of them is supposed to be dead for decades. The building has come to almost a standstill, as men and women try to get a glimpse of what in Freddie’s imagination is a legendary man who came back from the dead to walk in their hallowed hallways.

Freddie had been wondering just how far up the ladder that they can go with how the civil servants kept pushing them to meet someone else on a higher position than their own, until they have reached
the office of the Minister of State for Immigration. And just when Freddie thought that that is high enough as it is, they have to move rooms once more to finally meet someone on a higher position than hers, the Home Secretary.

It is the shortest meeting that they have yet with someone in the Home Office, as they have only just shook hands with the Home Secretary when he disappeared on them. Unsurprisingly, once again, they get told to wait. Now here they wait inside the room for some unknown reason.

Freddie fidgets in his seat. He fully supports the British monarchy, but it does not mean that he feels comfortable walking inside the buildings of what is essentially part of the heart of Her Majesty’s Government.

It is the longest wait yet, for by around half an hour later, a small, elderly woman with a stern face enters the room with the two ministers right behind her. She stops in her steps when she sees who is present in the room, her eyes focussing in on Corvo, in particular.

“You,” she says in such a sudden and informal and venomous way that that one word is more than enough to give Freddie and the lawyer that accompanied them the very right suspicion that she and Corvo know each other. For how and what reason of her cold reaction towards him, they do not know.

“Hello, Prime Minister,” Corvo greets back with a smile and friendly wave.

If Freddie were to tell his friends that he got to meet the current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in order to get his citizenship back, many of them would think that he is talking off his head. Even the few who might believe him would take this story with enough salt to make cured meats.

She frowns at them before she proceeds towards the desk to sit down on the seat that was occupied by the Secretary of State while a couple of civil servants brought in extra chairs for the two cabinet ministers.

“What are you doing here?” she starts.

“Why, it’s the same question that I want to ask of you!” Corvo says in mock surprise. “I must say, though, it’s been years since I’ve seen you last sat inside this office.”

The PM glares at him, clearly not interested in small talk.

“What are you doing here, Mr Corvo?” she repeats with his name this time with a stern voice.

“Just handling with citizenship matters,” Corvo answers, this time behaving. Freddie has a feeling that he is not doing that for her sake, however. “I’m here to help my friend here about regaining his British citizenship.”

The Prime Minister blinks, looking at him incredulously.

“Is this what the fuss is all about to have come all the way here from Downing Street?” the PM turns to look at the two cabinet ministers, wanting an explanation. She has not touched the file on the desk so she has yet to realise who exactly is sitting next to Corvo. “This could’ve been handled by the lower department levels.”
“We could have indeed done this without much complications,” Corvo agrees. “But for some reason, they kept kicking us up the ladder until we’re now here.”

The PM frowns, clearly unhappy and offended at what she is being dealt with. Beside her, the two ministers squirm in their seats.

“You may have gotten a brief note about it along the way, but nevertheless, let me introduce to those present in this room of who this man right next to me is. This gentleman here is my friend, Freddie Mercury.”

Even though some of them have read his file or probably heard through the grapevine, somehow it still surprises them to hear his name said out loud and they all seem to take a double take when they take a better look at Freddie. They are staring at something impossible right in front of them, that of a very famous person who should be very much deceased is sitting on a chair right in front of them. Alive, breathing, healthy, youthful, physically present.

And that something impossible is staring right back at them.

“He can’t be Freddie Mercury! You’re lying!” the Home Secretary exclaims. “He died twenty seven years ago!”

Something about the way they looked at him, the way the Home Secretary -a politician- talked at him as though he should not even be here irked him and it is what made Freddie to decide to speak up for the first time. And he knows what to say to these politicians that acts like a shot back at them.

“The reports of my death are not exaggerated, darlings,” Freddie says smoothly, crossing his legs. “I did die, and I remember the last moments of my life quite well before I departed for the other side. It was unpleasant to me. If you’re not sure, I’m more than happy to tell you the experiences of the pain and suffering of what I’ve been through and what dying from AIDS feels like,” he says with a smirk.

The Home Secretary goes quiet, wincing as the other two glared at him for his verbal blunder.

There is something satisfying about causing such a reaction to these people in such high positions in power and putting them in their place. Now Freddie is starting to understand why Corvo seems to enjoy causing these people to squirm.

“How and when did he appear?” the Minister of State for Immigration asks instead, deciding to switch the topic and salvage the situation.

“Mr Mercury appeared on the 26th of August just this year by what seems to be a like a hole that ripped open on the air and dropped him on the main stage of Reading Festival, on the day that my band Orion is performing,” Corvo explains. “Me and my bandmates and several crewmembers on the stage were key eyewitnesses of his return.”

The three politicians nodded.

“You may claim him to be Mr Mercury, but what made you believe that he is indeed Freddie Mercury?” the PM asks, referring over to Corvo. Freddie did not mind, since Corvo seems to be the one who knows more of what is going on and what to say to these people.

“His appearance and the interactions that I’ve had with him,” Corvo replies. He is calm and confident. In fact, he looks to be very much in his element in this environment. “His interactions with
Dr Brian May and Mr Roger Taylor have made them believe it so as well which also strengthened the evidence of who he is. But only recently we have DNA evidence that confirms that he is indeed Freddie Mercury in body and mind.”

The PM nods, although there is still an amount of skepticism of what Corvo had said. She will know how much of what Corvo said is the truth when she looks over the file.

“From what you’ve told me, you are here to assist Mr Mercury in regaining his British citizenship after being dead for the last 27 years?” she inquires.

“Yes, we would like to submit Mr Mercury’s application form and get it processed as soon as possible. It should be a straightforward procedure that somehow your people thought otherwise, as demonstrated by what we’ve experienced ever since we’ve arrived here at the Home Office.” The PM makes an unamused face, while the Home Secretary can only look away and stay quiet. “But now that we’re here and you’re here as well, we might as well classify his case as a special one,” Corvo says with a grin.

“He does have a point, Prime Minister. This is unique and unprecedented in the sense that we have never dealt with a person resurrected from death, let alone a famous person,” the Minister of State for Immigration quips in. From the looks that she had been giving to Freddie, he noticed that it is done more likely out of a sense of wonder and awe. Clearly, either she herself or her parents have been fans of Queen.

“So he is the first,” the Home Secretary speaks up again. Both ministers turn to look at the PM, waiting to see what her response towards this unprecedented case presented to them.

For all that had been anticipated that the PM might consider it, instead she pushes the file towards them.

“He can go through the normal channels as civilians do,” she says. “There’s no special treatment to be given to anyone for this process.”

Corvo stares at her. So does Freddie, but with an unimpressed face to cover his disappointment. He had lived through more than a decade under Thatcher. In comparison, no matter how she scowls and tries to act threatening, this current PM is not as fearsome as the Iron Lady.

Considering what has been happening so far, Freddie looks to Corvo, hoping and expecting that the Japanese singer may have something like an ace up his sleeves. He did not need to worry as he is correct in his assumption. In what is most likely an act of audacity, Corvo leans towards the desk, face resting against one hand closed into a fist. He gives a grin at the PM.

“Hasn’t it always been your goal to reach the position of king? Yet, it is also the most vulnerable position to be in, whether it is on a board game or in life itself.”

He points a finger upwards, as though there is an invisible sword of Damocles dangling above her head. Those words and the way he acted is like a trigger to the PM, as her response to that is to glare daggers at Corvo. The other two ministers did not say a word, worried and afraid of what will happen if they even interfere.

If looks could kill, the way she glares at Corvo made it looked as though she wishes that that can truly happen. She would have him killed several times over and find a way to dispose of his body. And she probably would get Freddie and the lawyer who came with them to disappear as well due to
them being eyewitnresses.

But unfortunately for her, that does not happen and Corvo merely smiles on. His reaction makes her
seethe and fume in silent anger. There is an inking in Freddie’s mind that based on what he is
witnessing, she is angry at Corvo because they are both aware that she can do nothing towards him
because he has not done anything wrong for her to find and use it against him. Meanwhile, Corvo is
the one who has the cards in his hands so she has to accede to his demand, or else.

“I do think that Mr Mercury’s case is far too unique to be put on through the normal process that it
needs more caution to be dealt with. Don’t you agree?” he says with a cheshire grin.

In the end, her glare reverts to a frown and she sits back on the chair as she picks up the file and
gives it a skim read through. That little action alone is more than enough to tell Freddie that they have
won a battle of wills against the very individuals who run this country.

“Look over the file and prepare the briefing notes to inform me by this evening,” she says to the
Home Secretary, handing the file over to him.

“Yes, Prime Minister,” the Home Secretary says, taking said file.

“My lawyer can provide more information if you want it,” Corvo says, sitting back to the chair
properly.

“That would be most welcomed, Mr Corvo,” the PM says with restrained politeness.

Screw it if there is anybody who believes him or not, Freddie decides, for this will be a story worth
telling to the others and get a laugh out of it.

Roger cannot wait to be home. Sure, they are now back in Britain after long hours spent in flight, but
he would not feel like he has really returned to his home until he is with his wife and kids. But first,
he is doing a detour to go to Brian’s house first so that he can see Freddie again.

If it had been months ago and he told someone that he is going to see Freddie, they would either
assume that he meant the statue that he has at his back garden or that he was dying, and they would
not be wrong in either one of those assumptions. But now it is different, so very different and it
brought Roger more happiness than in the last three decades of his life. Save for the birth of his
children, of course.

He and Brian have been relieved when they got informed that the DNA test results confirms that
Freddie is legitimately in a new body that is the same copy as his old one. It does spark a private
debate between him and Brian of how it was actually done. All they can chalk it down to is that the
godly beings that brought Freddie back are the ones who do know and have the information that
humans have yet to figure out on how to do it.

Freddie has adapted to his new life quite well, judging by their interactions with him. Even in his
anonymity, he has met and made new friends. Aside from that first time meeting that ended with an
unconscious Adam, contact between the two singers quickly made them become friends. Towards
near the end of the tour, Adam has been pester ing him and Brian on when they are going to reform
Queen with Freddie. Even Freddie had talked about wanting to perform again with the band.
It is not a topic that Roger has been dismissive towards. He and Brian have been discussing it in a private heart-to-heart manner between them during the down times that they have had during the tour in their hotel rooms.

Reuniting Queen obviously sounds like a great idea and the both of them would not mind performing with Freddie for the first time in decades. Freddie, however, has said that he wants a complete band reunion. He has successfully gotten in contact with John, albeit via email rather than physical contact yet, and the singer wants to see if he can persuade Deacy to play bass again. They do not have much confidence that John wants to rejoin the band, but they humour Freddie and let him be. If Freddie does convince John to come back, that is when they will eat their own words.

Thinking about all this gets Roger to be contemplative. Once, he had thought that the day he finally will see Freddie again is when he is at his deathbed, ready to meet his maker and his friends and family over at the other side. Now he is living in a miracle that he had never pictured himself to be in.

Both Roger and Brian are aware of their old age, however. Eventually, as time goes on, they will no longer have the energy or stamina to keep going on tours. With the arthritis on his fingers that has been plaguing him for several years now, Roger fears that he may only have a good few years left to do live shows.

But Roger does not care if he can only perform for a few years left. The joy of having Freddie back has affected his performance in an immensely positive way and it showed during their Las Vegas shows. He had more energy than usual when he sung and played his drums, and he had noticed Brian being similarly energetic in his performance as well. Even Adam had noticed and commented on the both of them.

Who can blame the two old queens like himself and Brian? For this chance to someday go on stage with Freddie as the frontman of the band again, he will endeavour to perform at his best for those few years to come.

Right now, he has more important things that he plans to do that come to mind.

“So, what kind of lame joke do we spring on Freddie this time when we see him?” Roger asks.

“You still want to continue on with these jokes?” Brian gives an exasperated look.

“You’re just as guilty as I am!” Roger huffs. “You love doing it too and you’re the one who started it all!” he points out.

Guilty as charged, Brian gives a roll of his eyes and an impish grin.

“We’ll just have to look for the openings,” the guitarist says.

They know these jokes and puns that they have inflicted on Freddie are silly, but just the thought of the reactions that they can elicit out of the singer alone is worth doing these lame jokes and puns.

Eventually, they see the gate to Brian’s Surrey estate and pass through it. Stepping out of the car and into the house, Brian gives a shout.

“Anita! Freddie! We’re home! We bought you souvenirs!”
Freddie skips out of the living room to meet them. What comes out of his mouth is what surprises both him and Brian.

“Dad! Uncle Roger! You’re home!” he exclaims.

Neither of them have expected that Freddie has come to embrace the dad jokes so well. A part of Roger feels disappointed. He was looking forward in seeing how far he can go with these jokes. While Roger inwardly consoles himself that he can still spring it as a surprise whenever possible in the future, those times were good while it lasted. Meanwhile, Brian takes it like a champ and embraces Freddie in a hug.

“It’s good to see you again, Freddie!” Brian says in a jovial manner, giving a few pats to Freddie’s back.

“Same here as well, Brian, Roger,” Freddie replies back.

Both the drummer and the guitarist have noticed Freddie had cut his hair. It is not as short as the one he had sported throughout the 80’s, rather it has been cut down to mid length and styled in a way that does not look out of touch with modern hairstyles and it makes Freddie look younger.

“You’re unusually gay today, Freddie. And you got a haircut!” Roger notes, after giving Freddie a hug as well and deciding to pounce on Freddie with a dad joke the next time the window of opportunity opens up.

“That’s because I have fabulous news for you all, darlings! For I’m a British citizen once more!” he sang in an operatic melody, doing a spin and a pose.

“Soon to be a British citizen once more,” Corvo corrects him, having followed Freddie from behind. “We haven’t decided on where to do the citizenship ceremony yet.”

Nevertheless, the news brings great delight to them all. For now, Roger can sleep in peace knowing that some of the problems that they have worried about have been solved faster than he had thought.

“Thank you so much for your help, Corvo,” Brian says sincerely. “You went above and beyond my expectations.”

“And mine as well!” Roger adds in.

“You’re welcome,” Corvo says towards Brian and Roger. “So, my unofficial tenure as a minder for Freddie is over now that you’ve returned.”

“Indeed,” Brian nods. “Thank you for looking after him.”

“But what if I need a personal assistant around?” Freddie sighs longingly. “Or does ‘butler’ sound much better for you?”

“I’m sure you can get in contact with Peter Freestone to take his old job back or have him help find a suitable replacement,” Corvo answers with subtle sarcasm. Freddie’s response to that is to laugh. He and Freddie have bonded quite well in their friendship to be able to be more informal to each other.

When he sees that Freddie is busy regaling Brian with stories and asking him about how the tour went and various other topics, Roger pulls Corvo away from the others for a more private chat.
“I’m impressed by what you’ve helped to accomplish for Fred, Corvo,” he says. “We knew that this would take time, but how did you get this all done in the span of time while we’re on tour? I know you told us that you would try to put him on a fast track of sorts.”

“That I did,” Corvo says with a nod. “And it was done. Although in my opinion the citizenship ceremony is somewhat unnecessary, since it’s just a PR move for the government to save face from what Freddie had said to them.”

Roger raises an eyebrow. He has to get Freddie to tell him what happened at a later time, for he is currently more focused on what is more important.

“Even on fast track, this is still ridiculously fast.”

Even though he knows that Freddie did not go through naturalisation, getting a British citizenship is something that Roger knows it is not easy to achieve these days in Britain. He has a few friends who struggled for years to even obtain British citizenship by naturalisation or marriage ever since the government changed the rules.

“Freddie was already a British citizen by birth in his previous life, so that was easier to work our way up from.”

“Come on, Corvo. Spill it to me. What did you really do?” Roger badgers on. Even though Freddie is a British citizen, getting his citizenship back still takes time in the form of months of waiting and paperwork.

Corvo turns to look behind himself to check if their distance from the others are far away enough before he leans close to Roger. “I can only say that the reason why this was done so quickly is because there are several individuals who owed me some favours,” he says under a murmur.

“What kind of people owe you such favours in the first place?”

It is what Corvo said next rather than the jet lag that kept Roger up at night.

“Do you ever wonder why Brexit is never talked about nowadays?”
After nearly a month with a majority of his time spent cooped up inside Brian’s house, Freddie finds himself bored of staying in Windlesham all day long. Now that Brian and Roger are back in Britain, he wants to go outside for a bit, to somewhere different.

His visits down to London had been two times by now, for the clinic and then the Home Office with Corvo alongside him, which gave him a brief chance to see how much London had changed for the past three decades. There are a lot more skyscrapers and buildings that are more pleasing to the eye than from his time. He even got the chance to see from a distance by the other side of the River Thames the London Eye and the tallest building in the whole of London, aptly named The Shard. Hopefully, once he gets to live in London full-time again, he can go up to the observation deck of The Shard to get a bird’s eye view of the city of London.

Today he decides to go see what Roger’s home is like. Roger had earlier on told him that he had moved out from his old Surrey mansion many years ago to a small village within Surrey named Puttenham. When asked if he can come down to see his home, Roger did not hesitate to say yes.

Coming in from the driveway, Freddie sees Roger’s mansion and he recalls what Brian said about how Roger lives in a place small enough that the locals know who owns the biggest house in the village. Turns out the guitarist was not far from the truth.

“Freddie!” Roger comes out to greet him. Although he tries not to show it, it surprises Freddie at how much Roger had changed over the last three decades. He took up the image to be more of a rock star than ever before, taking up tattoos along the way to solidify that image. He actually grew a beard.

That said, Roger seems to be more comfortable nowadays in acknowledging how bad his eyesight is and has taken up to wearing corrective lenses more often, whether it is by contact lenses or spectacles, but at home he is more comfortable with wearing the latter.

Roger introduces Freddie to his wife, Sarina who greets Freddie with enthusiasm and respect, and his two of his youngest children, Tiger Lily and Lola. Lola is actually still living with her parents whilst Tiger Lily is in Puttenham for a family visit. Both girls greeted Freddie with enthusiastic hugs.

“Can we call you Uncle Freddie?” Lola asks after hugging him.

“Why do you have to ask that, dear?” Freddie asks, perplexed at such a question.

“You feel like a long lost relative to us than someone we’ve never really met before,” Tigerlily gives the explanation. “Even though we’ve only really known you through photos, videos, and stories from dad and Uncle Brian and Uncle John.”

Hearing that, Freddie knows that this needs to be rectified immediately.

“Just call me Uncle Freddie, darlings,” he says. “I’ve been Uncle Freddie ever since John’s wife Ronnie bought the first child into our lives!”
With that, bonding with the girls becomes easy. They take photos with him so that they can send it to their oldest brother and sister -Felix and Rory, respectively- the ones who have met Freddie before. It briefly gives Freddie his time to shine by showing to the girls that he knows how to do selfies, and how to get them to all look fabulous in several of the photos.

“Only through the family group chat! Not on Instagram or Snapchat or any one of your social media accounts for now!” Roger quickly warns his daughters before they can do anything with the photos. The secrecy of Freddie’s existence meant that until the official announcement, only his bandmates and their immediate family and a select number of individuals are allowed into the secret for now.

“We know, dad,” Tigerlily rolls her eyes. “We just want to see Felix and Rory’s reaction that we’ve finally met Uncle Freddie.”

“Now Rufus is the only one who hasn’t met Uncle Freddie yet! He’s going to be so jealous!” Lola giggles.

“I know!” Tigerlily replies back with a mischievous laugh.

Watching them interact gives Freddie a fond smile. He remembered Roger’s method of raising his kids up and how he tries to get them under control and behave. He had never seen such rebellion and deep cynicism that should have come more from the eyes of a teenager rather than from the eyes of a child whenever the kids got too rowdy and Roger suggests to them to play ‘quiet time.’ The fact that they all eventually grew up and became productive members of society is nothing short of a miracle.

Roger then asks if Freddie wants to stay long enough for dinner. Upon hearing that, the girls pleaded for him to stay for dinner, and how can Freddie refuse the offer? He wants to get to know more about Roger’s family and feel more welcomed by them.

After a while, the girls separated off to do their own activities, promising that they will be present for dinner later.

“They and Rufus haven’t really met you before,” Roger says, smiling as he watched his daughters go to somewhere else.

“From what I’ve been told, there’s a few Deacon children that I haven’t really physically met either,” Freddie notes.

It should not surprise him that Roger and John have had more children even after his passing. They love having children. What he still cannot believe is just how many children both Roger and John have spawned; six for John and five for Roger. Combine the numbers together and it is enough to form two basketball teams and a referee.

“Once John meets you, maybe you can meet his now fully grown kids too,” Roger pats Freddie’s shoulder. “Come on, Fred. There’s something special in my back garden that I want to show you.”

“What is it?” Freddie asks, curious. If it is something that Roger wants to show him that is from the back garden rather than from a garage, it is probably not a sports car. He is hoping that it is not a sports car in the back garden.

“As if I would tell you right away,” Roger snorts. “Close your eyes, Fred. Wouldn’t want to ruin the surprise now, do we?” he says with a glimmer in his eyes.
“If you slip and fall, Rog, I will say to hell with the surprise and open my eyes,” Freddie warns him, even as he closes his eyes.

“I’ll be careful,” Roger replies, chuckling.

Freddie walks slowly to keep in pace with Roger, arm wrapped around the drummer’s as Roger leads the way. Even though Roger tries not to show it despite his old age, Freddie would rather want to stay close to help him in case the elderly drummer slips or struggles on reaching their intended destination.

“Here we are!” Roger exclaims, coming to a stop. “You can open your eyes now!”

Freddie opens his eyes, looks up and finds himself gawking at what is in Roger’s back garden, right near to the swimming pool.

“Looks good, yeah?” Roger asks with a grin. “Don’t have to fly to Montreux every time I want to find you ever since I got it.”

“I’m still trying to comprehend on the part as to why you have a statue of me in your garden,” Freddie replies, eyes staring up at the face of his own statue. It is painted gold and there is something about the way the statue’s eyeholes bore down at them that he finds it sort of creepy. “Did you miss me that much that you had to have a statue of me made?” he asks jokingly.

Roger lets out a snort. “I didn’t have it made. I stole it.”

Freddie raises an eyebrow, silently expecting an explanation behind it.

“There was a Queen broadway show in London. It was called We Will Rock You and it was played at the Dominion Theatre. The last show that was performed was just four years ago. It played for twelve years by then, longer than any other broadway shows in London,” Roger looks up at the statue, his grin now turning into a fond smile. “You really would’ve loved it, Fred.”

“Why did it end?” Freddie asks. If it lasted for twelve years, it must have been a good musical show to have been worth watching and have it last that long.

“The theatre badly needed renovations and it was time to make way for new shows by then,” Roger answers. “They were planning to turn the statue into scrap, so I hired a moving lorry after the last show and nicked it off. And it was just in time too.”

“Just in time?”

“I called dibs before Brian could get it,” Roger says with a proud face.

Roger stealing something like a seven-meter tall statue is something that does not surprise Freddie, but Brian is not someone who he expected would want to steal a statue. Actually, the guitarist is not even the last person that he expected. Up until Roger said it, Freddie genuinely believed that Brian would not have done something like that at all.

“I used to bring flowers to lay them under the statue at least twice a week,” Roger says, suddenly solemn. “Roses and lilies, your favourite flowers. When I’m not there, Sarina or the housemaid did it in my place.”
Freddie turns to Roger, surprise colouring his face.

“Before you came back, Fred, every time I wanted to see you it was through pictures, videos, my own memories,” Roger continues, as if compelled to tell his story. “There were so many things that I wanted to talk to you about and a part of me wanted to cry because you were no longer there and we couldn’t even be allowed to know where remains were kept. All we had to remember you by were through mementos. Just old memories that seemed to get farther and farther away as the years passed by.”

“Rog…” There are times when Freddie does not know what to say in response, and this is one of them. How does one figure out the appropriate words to answer this, much less try to fix or make up for lost time that they have no control over?

Roger lets out a shuddering breath before turning to Freddie with a sad smile. “Sorry, didn’t mean to let this all come out. But I wanted to say it.”

“Roger, dear, it’s okay.” Freddie insists, patting his arm. “I knew that I caused much pain coming from my death, but you guys never gave me the full story until now,” he says sincerely.

Assured that Freddie does not mind listening to what he wants to say, Roger continues.

“We were all in pain from losing you, Fred,” he says softly. “Each of us dealt with the grief of your death differently. Brian went on a solo tour before we convinced him to come back to the band. John eventually went into retirement six years after your death because he couldn’t keep on going anymore.”

“And what about you?”

“I defended you.” Roger answers, before he quickly corrected himself. “Well, we all did, but I started it.”

“What happened?”

“After you died, there were…” Roger pauses, his face in a grimace before he continues. “There were people who wanted to slander your name and they wanted to take advantage of it after you passed on. I don’t want to say what it was or it’ll make me lose it.”

Roger turns to look at Freddie, blue eyes so full of emotions that it pierces into Freddie’s heart.

“I lost my best friend who couldn’t even protect himself anymore. I was both angry and in grief, so I stepped up to do it.”

The drummer looks back up at the statue. “Having this statue is a symbol, in a way. It helps me remember of the times we’ve had together and what the rest of us have been through all these years to have you be remembered in a way that you deserved to be remembered for.”

Freddie is already letting out sniffling sounds, tears streaming down his face as Roger pulls him in for a hug. He has the best of friends as his family and they are evil as they keep making him cry. They really have been through a lot that he has yet to be able to fully understand it. Maybe he can never fully understand it.
“C’mon, Fred,” Roger says softly, giving him a handkerchief. He was going to use it for himself, but he can see that Freddie needs it more than he does right now. “Don’t cry. You’re here now. You coming back is something that we’ll never take for granted.”

“Now that I’m back and helping you all have new memories with me around again, will you throw the godawful statue away?” Freddie asks, before blowing his nose.

“And not letting this continue to piss off the old farts in the local town council who tried to have me remove it?” Rogers barks out a laugh. “Hah! Not in my life!”

Freddie cannot help but smile. Age had mellowed and changed Roger Taylor, but he is still the Roger that Freddie knows through and through.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter, Deacy appears!
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Hello, everyone! I apologise for the late posting as I've been on holiday for Chinese New Year and had spent some time resting. I did my best to write as much as possible over the holidays, especially as this chapter is very special and takes time to get it right. Last chapter, I said that Deacy will appear and I wasn't lying. What I didn't say is what Deacy will bring onto this chapter that makes it special. 😊

Enjoy and comment!

John Deacon finds his daily routine have not changed much, even with Freddie’s return to the living world. Being retired for two decades has given him more than enough time to set up a routine to his liking, adjusting and adapting when needed as things around him change, such as when his youngest child in the family slowly grew up to be a young man bound for University in front of his very eyes, for example.

As usual, John wakes up, gives his body a good stretch, and stands up to walk towards the bathroom for a wash up. Along the way, he gives his head a little scratch.

His scalp has been itching for over the past few days for some reason. It did not affect his sleep, thankfully, but the large pieces of dandruff that fall off his head does make him frown and worry. He has not shed this much dead skin off the top of his head ever since he grew more white hair than dark ones. Veronica has been nagging at him that it must have been the shampoo he has been using and he may need to switch for a different formula.

He sighs, rubbing his hand over his scalp gently instead of scratching it to soothe the itchiness. Perhaps it is time to listen to her advice and find a new shampoo to deal with his new problem. If it is worse than he had thought, he may have to pay a visit to the dermatologist to find out what is wrong.

John pauses. He rubs his hand over his head once more, this time letting the pads of his fingers feel the scalp more thoroughly. Quickly, he goes to the bathroom to check by the mirror. His eyes widened in shock at what he sees.

After checking to make sure that what he is seeing is real, he washes himself before changing his clothes. After a quick breakfast of tea and toast, he grabs a cap to put on his head and goes to get his car keys and phone. He calmly tells his wife that he is going out for a bit and he will tell her later of where he went.

Even under panic with such a huge discovery, John Deacon is nothing but an expert at coolly and efficiently managing his own life.

Freddie often sees Roger around the May residence on an almost daily basis. It is something that he had noticed ever since Brian and Roger have gotten back from America. He has seen Roger around
so many times that today, he is here for breakfast, the earliest time for him to come visit yet. It is only the three members of Queen sitting in the breakfast table, with Anita having left earlier on to do rehearsals for an upcoming Broadway show. Freddie had offhandedly asked the drummer whether or not he is neglecting his own family like this to have come visit him so early in the morning.

In this case, Roger’s answer is sincere.

“I see my family a lot, Fred. On the other hand, I haven’t seen you for twenty seven years other than through pictures and videos. I don’t know how much time I have left to live with this miracle of a second chance. Might as well move into Brian’s house to have us all hang out with each other, just like the old days!”

Brian rolls his eyes when he hears that, mumbling through his mug of tea about how his house is not a bed and breakfast. But the fond smile that he is sporting shows what he actually feels towards it.

Freddie only smiled and tries not to cry when Roger said that. Ever since what Roger told him the other day by the statue, he has been feeling melancholic and has had gone through a lot of thinking. While he is happy to be back and have his best friends/family around, what he had seen and experienced has made him all too aware that they are old and he can never be sure just how long do they have left to live.

He cannot help but wish that they, too, would have a second chance like him. To be as young as he is and to live a just bit longer.

It is not the first time that he had been thinking about it. He is happy and grateful to be back, let that not be a mistake. It is just that he wanted more out of it once he has finally met his old friends again.

It is wishful thinking, but at the same time, he has argued to himself over and over that it is not wishful thinking. If he can come back to life several decades later in a new body, having been given the chance that was offered to him by the godly beings from the Afterlife, then why not have his bandmates, his best friends, be young like him again?

Unless the process can only be done when they are in the Afterlife, which means that it would involve them to be dead first before it can be achieved. Not really something that he wants to wish for his bandmates to go through in order to be young again, but still, it would be rather nice to have them around for a lot longer rather than just a scant few years left.

For now, Freddie has to be content to have them around, regaling him with stories like the old men that they are and talking about something from the past that they have done as if it was just yesterday rather than twenty seven years since they have last met together to hang out.

Today, the topic the he and Roger have been discussing about is the merchandise that their band has released over the years. There is one item in their merchandise catalogue that seems to be a sticking point for Freddie.

“A Queen edition of Monopoly?”

“It’s a fun game, Fred. With all the places that we’ve performed at featured on the board and the tokens based on some of our famous items,” Roger says, trying to convince him that having this board game in their merchandise catalogue is a good idea.

“A Queen edition of Monopoly?” Freddie repeats. This time he raises one eyebrow for emphasis.
“Deacy agreed to it too,” Roger answered defensively.

Freddie hums, choosing to take a bite from a slice of buttered toast and sip his cup of tea first before giving his opinion on the matter.

“If you guys had wanted to sell Queen merch to make the fans feel closer to us and worth the money spent, you could’ve gone for Scrabble,” he suggests.

“If we do that now, you’re just going to mess with the rules and get some of the letters like the letter ‘Q’ to be worth a lot more points,” Roger says accordingly.

“Darling, I wouldn’t mess with the rules dictated for the board game. It is perfect just the way it is. And that letter ‘Q’ would be worth many points for its connection to our band,” Freddie says haughtily. “Think about it, Rog. Anyone can get a special edition of Monopoly made, but no other band would have done a unique version of Scrabble.”

“You just want to have it made to use it to get back at Brian for upstaging you for that one Scrabble match, aren’t you?”

Fortunately for Freddie, he did not have to answer that as Brian makes a commotion by coming back to the kitchen, phone in hand. In their focus on talking about band merchandise, both Freddie and Roger have been unaware of the guitarist having sneaked off the breakfast table to talk to someone on the phone.

“That was John on the phone,” he says. “He’s coming over in a few minutes.”

Hearing that gives the two men react with surprise and joy. The joy then turned into wariness when they see Brian’s grim face.

“Why doesn’t it sound like good news even though it should sound like it?” Freddie asks.

“I don’t know why, but I can hear it in his voice that there’s something that’s spooked him,” Brian answered, clearly worried.

“I hope it’s not some delusional fans having harassed him again,” Roger growls. Hearing him say that -that it has happened to John before- gets Freddie’s brotherly instinct to come into the forefront as well. Even though the bassist is now a lot older than Freddie both physically and mentally, in his heart and mind, John is and always will be like a little brother to him that he will look after for.

Despite whatever is possibly is causing Deacy to worry which gets them worried in turn, Freddie feels partly glad to know that John is finally coming to meet them. It feels right to be able to have all his bandmates here. That when together, they can solve the situation at hand. Or at least, try to figure out and help John to get out of whatever predicament he is in.

They do not have to wait for long, for soon Brian goes to the front door to greet and bring John in.

When John sees Freddie, he comes to a stop under the doorway, his feet unable to move further as he keeps staring at Freddie. It feels as though he would stand there, frozen forever, unless the singer himself makes a move. So Freddie decides to stand up, dusting himself before looking at John with a smile.
“Hey, John,” he greets with a small wave. “It’s been a long time.”

“Oh my god, Freddie!” Immediately, John rushes forward and wraps his arms around Freddie.

Even though Freddie is used to seeing Brian and Roger being old, it is shocking to see how much John had aged. This is one of the many reminders that is hammered down to Freddie that twenty seven goddamned years have passed. So many of the people that he knew of have since grown so old or have passed on. But Freddie is more distracted by John hugging him right now.

“It really is you,” John murmurs, his grip around Freddie surprisingly strong despite his feeble appearance.

“I honestly don't know how many more reunion hugs I have to go through,” Freddie jokes, hugging back. “But I’m not tired of it yet!” he quickly adds.

John pulls away with a big smile.

“So you finally picked up the courage to come see that I’m really back?” Freddie asks with a smirk.

“It’s part of the reason,” John says, still smiling. He turns to look at Brian and Roger. “Have any of you felt weird lately?” he asks.

Freddie shares a look with Brian and Roger, both men looking equally confused as well. None of them are sure what John meant by the definition of ‘weird.’

“Besides my beautiful self being back from the dead, young and fit again, I don’t know what you mean, my dear,” Freddie answers.

“We don’t know what you’re on about too, John,” Brian adds in.

John has his jaws clamped firmly shut, looking at them with trepidation before he sighs in resignation in what he has to tell them.

“I think my age is reversing,” he says with a serious tone. “I might be turning young again.”

The room goes quiet as the three men look at John with wide eyed bewilderment and skepticism. The latter feeling cannot be avoided since those words are the last thing that they have expected to come out of the retired bassist’s mouth.

“So the other part of the reason you came here is to pull our legs?” Roger deadpans. “That’s a pretty lame joke, even coming from you, Deacon. And me and Brian did dad jokes on Freddie.”

“I’m not joking, I swear it!” John argues. “Some of the spots that I have gained from old age on my body are missing too!”

“You can say that, but it doesn’t mean that you can prove it,” Roger points out.

“But—”

“I’m sorry, but Roger does have a point,” Brian says with an apologetic face for cutting John off. “We haven’t seen you for a long time, John, so you can’t blame us if we don’t know all the exact spots on your body that have gone missing which makes you look different than usual.”
John grimaces, silently conceding that Brian has a point. He lets out a sigh before he pulls his cap off, letting the three of them stare at what is on John’s head.

“I got new hair growing.”

John’s hair colour at his current age is supposed to be grey and white. Among the four of them, despite being the youngest, John was the first to have grey hair appearing before he even turned forty. Old age tends to give people receding hairlines and grey hair, yet over the bald spot that is supposed to be bald, roots of healthy dark hair are growing on the spot. And the roots from where his grey and white hair is growing have revealed that those, too, are growing out dark hair.

“How did you get hair growth treatment this good?” Roger asks, holding his hand out in wanting to touch John’s head to be sure that it is real. New hair growth is one way to claim that he is getting young, but there are other ways to explain the phenomenon for what is happening to John.

“It’s not hair growth treatment. I swear that I’m not lying. If there were any other causes to it I would know,” John says with a serious voice. “This is why I came to the only conclusion that I think that I’m getting younger and I don’t know why. I came here because I want to know if this has been affecting you guys too?”

Hearing John’s claim and then seeing the proof that came with it causes Freddie to think and to quietly freak out. If John is aging backwards as he had claimed, had his wish has also affected Brian and Roger as well? He really hopes so, but it is hard to tell just by sight alone, for only they themselves might know what has been different lately about their own bodies.

Surprisingly, it is Roger who is the first to speak up.

“I’ve been denying myself with this, but now that Deacy said it, I confess that I’ve been feeling weird for the last few weeks too,” Roger says sheepishly. “My hearing is starting to improve. I didn’t know why, but I can hear much better than I did since a month ago. And yeah, some of my spots are missing too.”

John scoffs while Freddie and Brian feel as though their jaws have dropped to the floor. Ever since he reunited with his bandmates, Freddie had quickly gotten used to having to talk to Roger with a louder voice as Brian and the others have been communicating with the drummer like this for many years now due to his lifelong career as a musician that damaged his hearing.

It is what Roger says next that is a huge bombshell to them all.

“What really shocked me is that my fingers haven’t been stiff and hurting. It’s been like that since the start of the tour that I’ve been thinking about going to a doctor to check for what happened to my arthritis.”

They all stare at him with wide eyes. This is indeed a significant clue that is proving John’s theory to be more true than false. Roger regaining his hearing is shocking enough, but that his arthritis is possibly gone as well?

“It’s the same for me as well,” Brian says, his mind running at full speed in trying to comprehend at what is happening to their own bodies. “My hearing is getting better and my skin doesn’t look or feel as sagging as I remembered it to be weeks ago. If what John said and showed to us about his hair is real, then that means...”
Brian is about to go and find a mirror to do it when Freddie offers to help.

“Let me help check your hair for you, Brian,” he says.

With that, the guitarist willingly bend down his head to let Freddie carefully comb through his curly mane. Underneath the grey and white curls, near to the roots, his hair had stopped growing out in white and is instead coming out in a dark brown colour. And in the once empty areas in between the hair follicles, new hair roots in dark brown are growing out of his scalp as well.

“My god, Brian, you’re growing new hair too,” Freddie says, shock and disbelief colouring his face.

Once it has clicked into their minds that this phenomenon is indeed affecting all three of the elderly men, the four members of Queen look at each other with wonder and amazement.

“Guys, you know what this means?” Roger says, eyes alight in excitement and pure delight.

“This is a scientific marvel…” Brian mumbles, his hand touching over his own curls.

“No, not that!” Roger snaps. “Even if it is interesting to me too, Brian,” he adds.

Roger looks at his best friends, his bandmates, and a wide grin appears on his face.

“We’re turning young and we can do Queen all over again!” he exclaims.

The reaction that Roger received in return is not much of the enthusiastic response that he had expected to happen.

“How is this even possible?” Brian murmurs, still distracted by the huge discovery.

Meanwhile, John is frowning with worry. “I haven’t touched a bass guitar for twenty years.”

Freddie is for once, the silent one, still digesting the news delivered to them and what he had seen with his own eyes. Is this his wish being fulfilled or has it been happening before he had even been thinking about his wish? If based on what Roger had said, that the change was slow and gradual that it took some time for themselves to have noticed the changes, did the transformation started to occur ever since he accepted the offer and came back to the living world?

Meanwhile, none of the others are aware of what Freddie is thinking as Roger is trying to convince them whatever is happening to them is obviously a good thing.

“Then just learn how to play again, Deacy! Don’t any of you guys see the opportunity happening right in front of us ever since Freddie’s back?”

“I see it, Rog. We’re not downplaying the significance of it,” Brian assures him. “The other important question is what age we might be at once this age reversal phenomenon stops and we start to age normally again?” he asks.

Brian’s question is logical as well as important to be given attention to. However, such a question is almost impossible to give an accurate answer for. Even Freddie himself had only estimated what his current age is since his return. The best that he can tell is that he must be in his late twenties or early thirties, although he prefers to think that he is not yet thirty years old. Speaking of age…
“I very much hope that it’s around my age. God forbid that I have to change your nappies or find good schools for you three,” Freddie finally speaks up for the first time, making a face of disgust.

Roger, however, is laughing in pure joy. The drummer’s infectious laughter and happiness has gotten Freddie to finally join along too. “Freddie, we’re turning young and we can do Queen again!” he says, clasping the singer’s shoulders.

“We’re Queen again!” Freddie exclaims with excitement buzzing within himself. He throws himself towards Roger for a hug. It did not take much encouragement to get Brian to join in on the hug as well.

John stands only a few meters away from them, hesitant and unsure of what to do, and the three of them noticed it.

“Come on, Deac. You weren’t here when we did our first group hug with Freddie. Now get in here,” Roger says, beckoning him with a free hand.

Prompted by Roger, John finally approaches the three. Hesitantly, he slots himself right in perfectly. There is a flush on his cheeks and a shy but steady grin. They are all smiling at each other and their hearts feel warm and full.

They are Queen. Truly and fully reunited at last.
Chapter Notes

I don't think that I've done a good job over this chapter due to the difficulty in getting the
dialogues sorted out and the strength of the story of what this chapter is focused on.
Nonetheless, I did my best to work it out and am ready to deal with the future chapters.
Enjoy and comment!

“They're turning young again?” Corvo says with surprise through the phone.

When Freddie made his call to Corvo, he had caught the singer just at the right time as Corvo is on a
break from rehearsal practice with his band. His bandmates who live in Tokyo have flown over and
arrived at London just a day before in order to practice and prepare for the next leg of their tour.

“It’s hard to believe it, but it’s true.”

The situation which Freddie calls it the ‘age reversal phenomenon’ is still too early to tell what the
ramifications will mean for his bandmates and their respective families. He made this call because he
wanted to talk to someone he can trust to keep it confidential and who is not the one affected by the
phenomenon.

Hearing that the three members of Queen are slowly reversing in their physical age and getting
young again has shocked and puzzled Corvo as well. It has also gotten Corvo into a mental frenzy
for some reason as he starts to talk about biology.

“They means that their telomere lengths must have extended. But what was the trigger that
made this happen and how is it also altering their cells to revert back to a younger stage and how
fast is the process? This is a huge scientific discovery since the Hayflick limit, Freddie!”

Despite how suave and smooth Corvo usually shows himself as, he is still an intelligent person with
a thirst for knowledge and has a wealth of information. So that means that there are times when the
nerdy side of him would surface and he talks almost like Brian does after a clear night out with his
telescope.

“Why do you know so much about human biology and age reversal?” Freddie inquires.

“I do research whenever I write song lyrics to follow a theme, so sometimes I stumble upon other
stuff that are not related to what I was supposed to focus on that gets me interested enough to study
it. Just a passing interest, really.”

Freddie raises an eyebrow in response, even though he knows that Corvo cannot see it. That partly
explains why there are a wide range of topics crammed into the songs that can make no two Orion
albums to be the same in terms of theme and genre. Freddie knows it because he had listened to all of
them.

“It’s amazing to me too that this is happening, but at the same time…”
Corvo picks up his pause. “What’s wrong with it? I thought you’re happy about it.”

“I am happy, Corvo, I am,” Freddie insists. “I just find what they’re going through to be a bit disturbing, though. I mean, I had been wishing that they can become as young as I am to live a lot longer, I just didn’t expect that it was already happening. It’ll be like watching a Benjamin Button effect happening right in front of me.”

“What, as if you coming back to life with a whole new body included wasn’t weird enough as it is?”

“Fair point,” Freddie concedes after a little bit of mulling.

“In regards to what your bandmates are going through, I think it’s part of extending their lifespan that goes along with bringing back their physical youth.”

“I barely understood what you’ve just said, dear. All I can say is that this age reversal phenomenon is unusual. To see that it can be real feels like I’m living in some sort of fantasy. Before you say anything, Corvo, I know I came back from the Afterlife and yet there are times when I still can’t wrap my head around the fact that I’m really back, let alone the recent discovery that my bandmates are turning young.”

“Believe it or not, in terms of the latter, it is and can be potentially real. Extending the human lifespan, staying youthful for a long time, finding the key to immortality. They’re what humans have talked about and sought out for thousands of years and it’s not some sort of fantasy when there are lots of examples of these in the animal and plant life on Earth. Scientists are still doing research and finding ways to achieve either one of them. So the theory and information are available, but so far there’s still no concrete way of how any of them can be achieved yet.”

For what he had claimed to be just a passing interest, Corvo seems to have collected a lot of information to have the sufficient knowledge for it.

“So the big question now is how will we know when it finally stops and they start to age normally again?” Freddie asks instead. Something else then comes up to Freddie’s mind. He had almost forgotten to bring this question out. “Do you think that this can affect their wives as well? Will they get young too?”

“Your guess is as good as mine,” Corvo answers. Freddie can picture the shrug that comes with the reply. “As for your second question, I really don’t know. Then again, if your bandmates are the only ones turning young, I doubt that Brian, Roger, and John would truly be happy if they’re the ones turning young while their wives will just stay at the same age.”

“Oh,” is all that Freddie can say, his shoulders slumped downwards.

What Corvo had said is the same dilemma that he and his bandmates have been stuck with. This was an issue that the four of them have talked about the other day that got their joyous prospects of living longer to be short lived once they have realised the immense consequences in the long term. And he can see why they would be upset by it, because up until then, he had thought that he will inevitably outlive all of them. To outlive your own spouse by decades…

“Hey, Freddie,” Corvo starts, pulling him out of his depressing thoughts. “I’ve just had a thought. Remember when you first came back and you told me about the godly beings that brought you back?”
“Yes?”

“And then just now, you told me that this age reversal thing started happening before you had even been thinking about it?”

“Yes,” Freddie blinks and sits up straighter. He has an inkling of where Corvo is going with this.

“I think the godly beings who helped to bring you back here might also be the ones behind making your bandmates young again. Which means that they’ve been thinking ahead. So I’m pretty sure that with their foresight, they must’ve noticed the same dilemma that we’re talking about right now and have gotten your bandmates’ wives to turn young again too, at the same pace that they’re at.”

“That might actually make sense for how this all happened! Oh, thank you, Corvo! I don’t know how to repay you for this,” Freddie says with gratitude. He will have to thank the godly beings in gratitude as well for what they have gifted upon him and his best friends. He does not know whether or not if they accept prayers and offerings, but he will give out both as a way of thanks.

“Don’t thank me yet,” Corvo says, chuckling. “This is only a hypothesis. You and the rest of Queen will have to be observant and find if my hypothesis is proven to be true. I doubt that we’ll ever find out in our lifetime in how or why the godly beings are doing all of this, especially as they’re in a whole other world entirely that no mortals can go there. This is the next best thing that I can assume that they’ve done for you.”

It brings about a sense of hope. A sense of possibility. A silver lining on the clouds. Freddie will have to ask for his bandmates to keep an eye on their wives to see if they, too, are affected by the age reversal phenomenon or not. There is no point in moping in despair so early on without at least making an effort to try and observe if their own spouses are turning young or not.

“Skipping that topic for another time when I get a better grasp of understanding it—” Freddie almost snorted when Corvo said that. “—what’s the plan for your upcoming announcement?”

“Well, we’ll have an addition in the announcement in that John has agreed to join back the band.”

“That’s incredible! That’s really good to know. You must be really happy to meet John again.”

“Yes, yes I am, my darling little crow,” Freddie says, smiling.

After finally coming to meet the three of them and revealing to them the amazing discovery that has changed and will change their very lives, John stayed at Windlesham for almost a whole day to have a good long talk with his old bandmates and best friends. Mainly, he talked to Freddie the longest. The both of them were reluctant to part when it had gotten late and the bassist must return home. There is still much to catch up on, but since he finally reunited with his bandmates, John had promised to come visit as often as possible.

“So what’s the next step after the complete reunion of Queen?”

They spent a few more minutes having small talk before Corvo had to end the call as his short break is over and he must return to band rehearsals. His words were reinforced by the impatient strumming noises of an electric guitar and drum beats that Freddie can hear through the phone.

Truthfully, what Freddie said to Corvo about his future plans are just that: words. Words that feel
vague to him and he is not sure when and where exactly to start from. It is easy to say things like do a new album, do a tour, what any musicians in a band would do and answer like an auto response whenever some journalist asks them what they plan to do next. Other than the announcement, it is odd to have barely anything concrete planned that far ahead. With everything that is going on, the best that he can do is to take things one step at a time.

As much as Freddie wants to enjoy his life by not having the tabloids find out that he is alive and track down his location, he knows that this anonymity will not last. Sooner or later, he has to reveal to the world that he is alive again rather than let them eventually find out or, for an even worse scenario, that he lives on as a recluse.

Talking to Corvo about his ‘plans’ has, however, made him start to think seriously of other matters that will be important in the future ahead of him. Namely, he wonders how long he can stay as a house guest.

Brian and Roger and John are more than happy to accommodate him and they have repeatedly said that he will never overstay his welcome at any of their homes. Even Corvo had offered his home should he want to come over and have a different place to stay.

Yet it is exactly the problem. His current living situation reminds him of his younger days couchsurfing at a friend’s home. Only difference is that he is staying in a fancier home owned by one of his now elderly bandmates and he has his own bedroom, with en suite bathroom included, rather than a sofa or floor to sleep on.

This is what got him to come into the conclusion that he wants a house for himself as the first step of regaining his independence. And the topic is still sticking in his mind when John comes to have afternoon tea with him today and the main point of their conversation.

To be more accurate, Freddie is the one doing the talking while John can only listen on. He knows that they are supposed to catch up and have a proper talk, which is important, but the plan came first and he hopes that the bassist will support it.

“Taking back Garden Lodge is out of the question. There are too many memories attached to it and Mary still lives there. I may not have talked to her since that day, but she’s old and it doesn’t feel right to kick the elderly out of their homes. You understand it, don’t you Deacy?”

John is only able to nod before Freddie continues on in his monologue.

“This is why I want a fresh new start! So that means that finding a new house to purchase is part of the plan. Once we’ve sort through my finances, of course.”

“Yes, but Fred—” Those are the only words John manages to say out loud as part of his verbal opinion but Freddie is not pausing.

“Maybe I should buy one that is within London. Or one that is out of London but still close enough to be chauffeured to the city.”

Just as John is about to give an honest answer, Brian and Roger walked in, having returned from a meeting that Freddie vaguely recalls had something to do with a movie.

“What have the two of you been talking about?” Roger asks.
“Oh, just catching up on the past,” Freddie answers innocuously.

“Freddie wants to buy a new house and move out,” John says without hesitation.

Freddie shoots a glare at John. The reason why he only talked to John about it is in order to not let anyone else know of his plans yet, especially to Brian and Roger. The snitch.

“I’m thinking of buying a property to call it home once I’ve established myself again,” Freddie says, giving out a more elaborate explanation. There is no point in trying to deny it when the cat is out of the bag.

Roger looks at him as if he has grown a second head. Even Brian is hesitating. The silence is not what Freddie expected and he finds it disconcerting. He had expected a more verbal protest of sorts.

“Freddie, why would want to do that?” Brian finally asks, concerned.

“And are you sure about it?” Roger asks cautiously.

“Positively!” Freddie answers. “Look, I’m grateful that you’ve all graciously offered to let me stay at your homes without anything in return, but I’ve been living in Brian’s home far longer than intended as a guest and I don’t want to abuse your hospitality. I’m thinking ahead for my future since I don’t want to overstay my welcome.”

“I don’t see you to be a burden as my house guest, Freddie,” Brian answers with sincerity. “You never were and you’ll never overstay with me or Roger or John.”

“Then why do I get the feeling that this idea of mine is treated as if it’s a bad idea?” Freddie asks, eyes narrowing.

“I think what me and Brian and Roger have been thinking of is more the concern of property pricing, which is what I’ve been trying to tell you,” John says with a sigh, finally able to give his opinion. “Have you checked how much houses and flats cost these days, Freddie?” he asks.

“What, you guys think I can’t afford it?” Freddie says with a huff and a cock of his eyebrow, hands on his hips. “I know that property can rise up in price as time goes on, but it can’t be that bad.”

If Freddie is tempting fate, then he is not hiding from it as he is so much directly confronting it and showing his two fingers at it. His three bandmates share a look at each other, before Brian borrows Freddie’s tablet that is on the table. After a few taps, he hands it back to Freddie, revealing that he had gone onto a real estate website.

“It’s best you take a good look,” Brian advises.

When Freddie looks at the top list, his eyes widened as he takes a sharp inhale of air through the nose.

“What you’re seeing there is how much houses and flats cost nowadays,” John states after getting a brief look at what website Brian is showing to the singer.

“And that’s just in Kensington,” Roger adds in, having seen the location that Brian had picked out.

When Freddie starts scrolling down on the list, he can feel the blood draining from his head. How is
even possible that an apartment that has the same size and amount of rooms as his old flat is now more expensive than when he had purchased his mansion?

It seems that it will be some time before he can afford to live as he wants to.
In his previous life, many years ago, if someone had asked Freddie what is the future of Queen, he usually brushed it off with a laugh and a dry remark or two.

Before his diagnosis, the future of where the band will go was something that he had no serious thoughts for other than to make great music and perform with his best friends. He has everything he had long sought after and the only thing in mind is to keep rising upwards as living legends.

He only changed his mind after he was confirmed to have AIDS.

Around the last couple of years of his previous life, Freddie had talked to his bandmates about the future of Queen. It was a hard and painful decision to make, but by then he knew that it was necessary to do so. His legacy by extension is also Queen’s legacy. He wanted to be remembered as headstrong and fearless right to the end, for not only to the world, but also to his bandmates and his loved ones.

It was hard work to convince them to continue the band on without him, but he persevered to eventually have them agree to it. He even made them swear it as a promise. God knows what would have happened if there were no promises made, but Freddie is more than certain that the outcome would have been a huge mess.

Now, twenty seven years later and back in the mortal world once more, he is happy to see that they kept to their promise, if slightly adjusted here and there over the years. Queen is still going strong, so that means that there are some unintended benefits for Freddie.

First, is that it does not take much to convince all four of them to play together again. It is an idea that they all agreed to, so there is not too much trouble for Freddie to reintegrate himself back into the band. Or for him to convince John to meet his bandmates again and rejoin Queen.

Second, with Freddie’s unexpected return to the living world and the recent discovery that his bandmates are all slowly turning young again, it has gotten them all together again to slowly mend whatever rifts and wounds that they have had over the years. There are no solid plans of what they want to do for the band yet, but they are all eager and looking towards the future with hope. That is a good sign in itself.

However, the benefits has its drawbacks, for it also means that he takes the position of singer and frontman of Queen back from Adam, a position that the American singer has held for several years without having ever imagined that Freddie will eventually return to the living world.

Even though he had been told by Brian and Roger that Adam did not mind it in the least, it still had
gotten Freddie to feel bad enough about it that he got into an international call to him on the evening. Although Freddie apologises to him, Adam is in a jovial mood and he confirmed to him that Brian and Roger were right about what they had said.

“I’ve been planning on doing another album as a solo artist again anyway and you just gave me the opportunity to go for it,” Adam adds in cheerfully. “So if anything, I should actually be thanking you, Freddie.”

“I still feel bad to see you leave the band,” Freddie says. “You can’t go ‘poof!’ and be gone just like that. It wouldn’t be fair on you or the fans who like you being in Queen.”

“Hey, Freddie, it’s okay,” Adam assures him with a gentle voice. “It was my decision. When I saw that you’re actually back, I knew it was going to eventually happen. I actually encouraged it. You’re meant to have your position given back to you.”

“Adam…”

“And, well, even before then, way before any of us thought that you can come back, I was just a placeholder,” Adam rambles on. “I couldn’t fit into your shoes even if I tried.”

The more Freddie hears it, the less he is able to hold back his reaction.

“Adam Lambert, don’t you dare say another load of rubbish to yourself right now! Do you even hear what you are talking about?!“ Freddie exclaims, using the force of his voice to stop the American singer from talking in such a negative manner to himself.

“...Sorry,” is all Adam can say.

Freddie lets out a huff, calming himself down before he speaks.

“Adam dear, you’re not a placeholder,” he says in a careful and even tone. “Brian and Roger and, by proxy, John accepted you into the band to be the singer for a good reason that I fully understood why.”

When he hears silence from the other end, Freddie takes that advantage to continue on what he is meant to say.

“I’ve seen you on stage, Adam. You have the energy, the flair, and the strength to have carried the role of frontman for years, especially in a band like Queen. And do you know what was the most amazing thing that I saw? You took that role and moulded it into your own style. You wouldn’t have looked out of place.”

Every word that comes out of Freddie’s mouth is his honest and sincere opinion.

“Even if I had stayed on in the Afterlife, I fully trust my best friends to be able to find a suitable singer to sing our songs, whether they be a man or a woman, and they didn’t disappoint me in who they’ve found to achieve it. That’s you, Adam.”

“Thank you, Freddie,” Adam finally speaks up again. “That really, really means a lot to me.”

“Once you’re in the band you’re always a part of Queen, Adam. You’re in a family and you belong
“in one,” Freddie says. “Don’t you ever forget it or deny it. Got it?”

“We’re family,” Adam replies back and there is a muffled noise that sounds as though he is choking back a sob.

“Good to know that you have your senses back. Now, I must ask you this. Can you fly over to London the day before the announcement?” Freddie asks. “I want you to come.”

“R-Really?”

“Yes, darling, I want you to come over to be here with us. You’re part of the band and at the very least, you deserved to be heard of what you plan to do in the future.”

“I’ll book for the earliest flight to London tomorrow. I can promise you that.”

“Treat yourself by getting first class.”

“Can that be optional?” Adam asks jokingly.

“You’re a star, darling! You must treat yourself as one!” Freddie answered, grinning ear to ear. In his heart, just like many years ago in his previous life, he knows he made the right decision.
Chapter 23

With the date of the announcement arriving soon, Brian and Anita move back to their London house, bringing along Freddie with them. After nearly a month spent in Surrey with the very occasional planned and supervised outings, the guitarist was surprised to see that Freddie had accumulated items that have become his personal belongings, mostly in the form of clothes, toiletries, and gadgets.

Seeing Freddie having personal belongings again for the first time since his death should not have surprised him. After all, during the tour, he and Roger helped to cover the expenses of whatever Freddie wanted, expect bidding for antiques, much to Freddie’s annoyance. Well, it was mostly Brian covering for it. The members from Orion have given Freddie some items as birthday gifts as well. Anita had brought Freddie out on those supervised outings from time to time, which included a bit of shopping.

Brian has heard the stories that Freddie had regaled to him about how people just do not recognise him in this day and age, such as the tale of when he went a Waitrose supermarket with Anita and he paid for groceries at the till and the cashier thought he was some other famous person who was not Freddie Mercury, which gets the singer very gleeful and get a good laugh out of it. It is understandable for Brian on why the singer is very happy about it, for up to his death in his previous life, it was very difficult for Freddie to get around without being recognised one way or another.

But what did surprised Brian is how quickly all of those stuff adds up in just under a month. It required two large luggage cases to store all of Freddie’s stuff in to move from Surrey to London. It was the shoes that took up a lot of baggage space, especially as Freddie had insisted on bringing the shoeboxes along.

Tomorrow being an important day, Brian wanted to make sure to sleep early and be ready in time. But tonight, he cannot sleep. He tries not to toss and turn too much, feeling his eyelids just wanting to open up rather than be kept shut. He had a bit of trouble getting to sleep while in Surrey as he is more used to his house in London than the one in Windlesham, but at least he can eventually fall asleep. Something is gnawing at him from within. Not wanting to disturb his wife’s sleep, Brian gets up from the bed.

One thing that Brian is liking immediately about the benefits of turning young again is the lack of joint aches. It has been like this for a few weeks now since he only started to notice it midway through the tour, but he is still getting used to having not to anticipate for the aches whenever the weather turns cold. A small blessing, but hugely appreciated.

Brian wanders down the hallways, pondering on what to do to pass the time. He certainly does not want to take his telescope out to look at the stars, especially during a cloudy night. Maybe some light reading with a nice book in the library can nod him off to sleep.

Imagine to his surprise when he stumbles upon Freddie in the library room, sitting on an armchair with the Queen in 3-D book on his lap. Both men jumped in shock upon seeing each other.

“Can’t sleep?” Brian is the first to ask.

“I was going to ask you the same question,” Freddie replies, squinting at Brian through the cross-eyed glasses that he is wearing. “Wasn’t in the mood to watch TV or go through the Internet. I wanted to do something quiet.”
“I’d the same idea in mind too,” the guitarist says, entering the room and sitting on another armchair cross from Freddie’s. He takes a look at what page Freddie is currently at on the 3-D book. “That’s a good book that you’ve picked.”

“It is,” Freddie agrees. He looks back down on the book. “I knew you liked to take photos even back in our youth. I didn’t know you’ve taken so many over the years,” he notes.

“It’s always surprising at how much the things that you collect can accumulate over time,” Brian says, remembering Freddie’s luggage to find a similarity. “Nervous about tomorrow?” he asks.

Freddie nods. He flips through a few pages, looking at the stereo pictures with rapt attention.

“Tomorrow is the day when my anonymity is gone,” he finally says with a sobered voice. “But at the same time, I know that I’m going to be free in a different way. I guess I’m just nervous overall, Bri.”

Freddie flips through the pages, looking at the photos intently with the cross-eyed glasses.

“Feels like a long time ago when we were bright young men, weren’t we?” Freddie asks quietly, reminiscing memories from once upon a time.

“You’re now the bright young man in our band. I’m just old.”

That gets a reaction out of Freddie in the form of a chuckle. “You and Roger and John and your wives are turning young again, remember that. You’re just old for now, my dear.”

“It means that I’m still old.”

Freddie takes off the cross-eyed glasses to give a look at Brian. “Now, Brian, don’t think that I haven’t seen you take selfie pictures everyday ever since the huge discovery that Deacy led us to,” he chides the guitarist.

“I want to see the speed of the progress to calculate how long it takes before we’re as young as you are,” is Brian’s excuse.

Brian had noticed early on that the speed of the whole age reversal process is not instantaneous. It is slow and subtle, yet the speed of it aging them backwards is still incredibly fast in changing them at a daily rate, making it hard to pin down on whether it will be next month or next week when he would be around the age of a middle-aged man.

He is not really sure if Anita has noticed how different her husband looks, or that she is aging backwards as well. Which is why he wants to calculate and figure out how long the process will take by collecting data, even if said data is collected by taking pictures of himself. At least having the numbers crunched down is better than relying on the ‘wait and see’ approach on when the age reversal progress comes to its end and they will finally appear around the same age as Freddie.

“Do tell me once you’ve figured it all out,” Freddie says, humouring him as he puts the glasses back on. “You know, looking at these pictures, it reminds me of how no matter how many years have passed for us, we’ve always looked out for each other.”

“Yes, we do,” Brian mutters just loud enough to be heard.
It is not often that Brian has Freddie by himself. With people constantly coming and going in his house since Freddie’s return, it is rare to have time that can be spent with only the two of them. Looking at Freddie reading the stereoscopic book that contains pictures of their past together, Brian comes to realise what the gnawing feeling that he has been feeling is. He knows his mood has not been good over the day, what with juggling on tasks such as preparing for the announcement, having to prepare a speech, and ensuring that there are no leaks to the press or the Internet up to the last minute, but now it is exacerbated by his own past haunting him.

There are regrets that Brian has not told Freddie about from their past. There are so many things left unsaid from all those years ago and Brian thought he lost that chance forever to reveal it all for Freddie when he passed away. Now Freddie is here, alive and healthy, and no matter how many times Brian wants to thank whoever allowed him to come back, a small part of himself wonders if he deserves such a miraculous gift in the form of his friend’s return to the living world.

Brian receives a small shock when Freddie pulls him back to the present time by speaking up.

“Brian, you’re thinking too much.”

“What do you mean?” Brian asks innocently.

The singer lets out a huff. “I’m not a mind reader, but I can sense that something is bothering you. You must at least speak up about it for me to understand what is the matter.”

It has been a long time since he has been through something like this before. Brian mentally chastised himself as he should have recalled that Freddie can read his body language and somehow always knew whenever he is overthinking or depressed. He knows it is a silly thought, yet if he does not say it now…

“I’m sorry,” Brian says quietly.

“Pardon?” Freddie looks at him with confusion. “What are you sorry for?” he asks.

Brian bites his lips before he sighs, now knowing that he can hide it no longer and starts to explain.

“I want to apologise for how I’ve been towards you all those years ago. When you told us about what you had and what your plans were for Queen. The fights we’ve had in the recording studio over the songs that you wanted to have in the album when I should’ve reminded myself that… that you were dying. That we shouldn’t have fought and I should’ve been kinder to you.”

When Brian finally stops, he sees Freddie staring at him with an unidentifiable look.

“Why should you be sorry for that?”

“I just wanted to let it out. To let you know what I’ve felt in how I’ve treated you all those years ago.”

Freddie puts the cross-eyed glasses back into its sleeve before shutting the large book up with an audible thud and put it aside.

“Brian, you shouldn’t be sorry for that. I knew I was dying back then, but at the same time I didn’t know how much time did I have left to live. I just wanted to get as much out of me while there was still the time and energy left inside of me,” Freddie says. He gives a sad smile at Brian. “Even though
I tried to hide it and the rest of you have probably known it, a part of me was afraid of dying, but I didn’t want to live for what few years that I had left wallowing in pain and misery. I can’t imagine myself living like that, it would be awfully boring.”

Leave it to Freddie to be able to inject some humour into a serious discussion. He gets up and gives Brian a hug.

“I didn’t mind the fights we’ve had, Bri. It’s something that we always did whenever we were in the recording studio. We’re dammingly stubborn perfectionists. It’s normal for us. What happened to us is all in the past where it should be. What we did together gave me brief moments of feeling normal rather than think about the impending demise ahead of me.”

In a moment of tenderness from Freddie, Brian receives a kiss on his forehead.

“You’re my soul brother, Brian. My soulmate,” Freddie says with absolute sincerity and respect. “If anything, I should be the one thanking you and the others for taking good care of me and for helping to bring my last wishes to reality all those years ago.”

“Thank you, Freddie,” Brian says, doing his best to not get choked by emotions. He lived for so long with the regret of being unable to say or do something right for the people who were so important in his life. To be finally able to say this to one person, to the one person that had shaped his life just as he had shaped theirs and is now alive again and to be able to hear their response, it leaves Brian feeling the age old wounds that he has are finally starting to heal.

“Thank you, Brian,” Freddie replies back. He pats his back, giving a hum that turns into a song that the guitarist recognises. It has been a long time since Brian had last listened to ‘Soul Brother’, hummed by Freddie himself no less. Brian listens on in content silence until he starts to notice that the tune changed into something that he does not recognise. The only reason he would not recognise it might be because…

Brian grins. “I know what you want.”

“Pardon?”

“You got new songs, which means you want me play something. You weren’t just nervous about tomorrow, were you?”

Freddie pulls away with a wry grin. “I’ve got some new ideas in my head that’s been having me stay up late. I’ve been recording it into the phone whenever the inspiration strikes. I didn’t want to wake you up for it.”

Now that his hunch is confirmed, Brian knows exactly what Freddie wants to do. After all, it is the least that he can do after what just happened. “That’s considerate of you, Freddie. Do you want to go to my private studio and show me what you got?”

“Are you sure? It’s quite late,” Freddie asks with some hesitation.

“I couldn’t sleep as well,” Brian shrugs, standing up from his seat. “Might as well do something to pass the time.”

He walks out of the library to go to the studio, with Freddie following behind him. After arriving at their destination and turning on the lights, the first thing that catches Freddie’s attention is an electric
guitar resting peacefully on its stand.

“She’s still here,” Freddie says with a healthy amount of respect. “I mean, I’ve seen it in the livestream. I just can’t believe with my own eyes that your guitar’s still here.”

“The Old Lady has had repairs and maintenance over the years, but she still plays amazingly,” Brian says with a bit of pride mixed in his voice.

“I remember when we used to say that your guitar was the cheapest equipment of all because it was made from scratch,” Freddie says with a chuckle. “But now she’s priceless.”

“Money can’t do anything to recreate her. And money can’t do anything to have me part with this instrument too.” Brian turns the singer towards a grand piano.

The black grand piano by the corner of the room does not look anything out of the ordinary. However, the longer Freddie looked at the piano, the more he recognised it. More specifically, whose piano it is.

“Is that… is that mine?” Freddie uttered, his fingers gliding through the lacquered keys. His mind tries to convince him that it might be another piano of the same brand, yet in his eyes and in his heart, he cannot deny that it is his own piano. “You’ve kept my piano for all these years?” he asks, turning to Brian with wet eyes.

“I took it the very first chance that I can get,” Brian says solemnly. “Next to my guitar, your piano is what I cherished the most because of the history she had with Queen and because of her connection to you.”

Freddie turns back to Brian to give him a hug.

“You’re really a sentimental old man, Brian. And I’m grateful for it.”

“You’re welcome,” Brian replies with a smile. Taking Freddie’s grand piano is one of the decisions that he did not regret.

While Freddie is preoccupied with playing his own piano for the first time in nearly three decades, Brian picks up his guitar. Once he sets it up with a small amp and fiddled around with it, he tests it out by playing to a song that he has played quite a few times.

“What was that melody, Bri?” Freddie asks, pausing from playing with the piano. “It’s beautiful.”

“It’s an old song. Well, it’s an old song to me,” Brian explains. “It… it was made years after you were gone,” he says hesitantly.

“Do play it for me, darling. We’ll play mine later,” Freddie encourages.

So Brian does.

It took some time for him to remember how the song goes to play it in full, but he manages after a few mistakes here and there. He can hear Freddie humming along to some parts. For just a moment, just one brief moment, Brian thought that he is back in the studio from another time, from many years ago, playing with the Red Special while Freddie listens to get a feel out of a new song in the making and how he should sing it.
It was not a simpler time as some would want to believe it, because the guitarist remembers quite well that doing album recordings can be difficult when time, budget, and clashing egos are involved. Rather, those memories are a time that Brian cherished and desired for.

And, as it finally dawns on him, he can have it again.

When he finishes, he hears Freddie let out a contented sigh.

“Listening to you play new music to me was what I missed the most at the other side,” Freddie says.

“It’s the same for me as well,” Brian confesses. “Hearing you sing, that is.”

Freddie gives a grin. “Since this is an old song, do you have the lyrics for me to sing?”

Amazingly enough, Brian still has the original lyrics in paper. As much as it would be easier to read the lyrics already available to the public on a computer or a smartphone than his own cursive handwriting, he knows that Freddie prefers doing it with paper to figure out how to sing the song in his own way. Then again, there were rarely any songs that Brian created that were not designed to be sung by Freddie himself.

Their stay in the small studio lasted for several hours. By the time they forced themselves to stop, knowing that they need to sleep even for a few hours, they have a few songs put together and several other riffs and ideas recorded to check back on it at a later time.

If Brian had a hard time getting to sleep due to what had been bothering him, now he has a hard time sleeping due to a feeling that leaves him buzzing with excitement. The band is back together for real with its original members. A new Queen album in the making. This is a fresh start for the band for the first time in a very long time.

Brian only slept for only a few hours rather than the recommended eight hours, but he woke up feeling refreshed and awake. A small blessing, but he knows he will need the energy and clear mind to be ready for what he and his bandmates will face today.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Hello, everyone! I just posted this just in time before I'm off on a holiday for the next 2 weeks! I will try and reply on the comments from the last chapter and the current one! Have a nice day!

Also, thank you everyone for helping to bring in 10,000 hits for this story! It's the first time I've ever seen one of my stories reached this far and it is an achievement that I'm very grateful for! Thank you so much!

John is nervous.

A wall, a door, and a hallway are all but separates them from the other room. On that other room contains the press and journalists from various newspaper and news media industries. All of them probably jostling and fidgeting in their seats, curious and impatient to find out what is so important that the band Queen wanted to do a press announcement. None of them are aware of what the band will show to them, what they will reveal to the whole world.

John is nervous because this is the first time in decades that he is back with Queen and to do a press statement. With the exception of performing on stage, he has never really enjoyed doing public appearances, especially talking to the press. He tries not to show it, but his nerves are showing itself by his tapping fingers.

Wanting some distraction, he takes a look around him. Adam is talking quietly with Roger at one corner. Brian is on the phone, talking quietly with his wife. Sitting on a sofa on the other end of the room by himself is Freddie. He has a pair of sunglasses hanging off his shirt. Judging by what they will face soon and the bags under Freddie’s eyes, the sunglasses will have a dual function for the singer.

John can see that Freddie is nervous as well and why, because soon he will reveal to the world that he is alive again, that he has spent over a month in anonymity adjusting to his new life in the 21st century and regaining his citizenship. Getting the latter accomplished would not seem like a big deal at first, since it is just getting an identification card and a passport. Yet those things are easily taken for granted by so many because in the long run, having Freddie Mercury confirmed that he is legitimately real and alive again with documents and identification provided will help him regain an independent life sooner rather than later.

John tries to picture what are the immediate effects that comes with the reveal of Freddie’s return. The first thing he can imagine is the shock, surprise, and joy for the fans to see that Freddie is back. The second is imagining the riot that immediately will come from the journalists and the loaded questions that they demand answers for.

In the long term, there are going to be religious organisations and conspiracy theorists getting into intense debates or fights in trying to figure out what are the ramifications to it, and why Freddie is picked to be the one to come back. To John, he does not care whatever those religious people will think. For him, all it means is that his best friend is back and he will never take that for granted.
John puts his hand over his head to give himself a good rub to calm his nerves. Feeling the short hair tickling his palm and fingers brings up a smile on his face. He is happy that he is no longer bald anymore. Veronica had commented about his hair in surprise and asked how it happen. So far, he has not told her the truth yet for he wants to see if she is turning young as well before he can tell her. He tries to spot the signs on his wife but he cannot see it yet.

He is hopeful. He has to be hopeful. Veronica has been with him by his side for so long that he cannot fathom having anyone else to be his wife and lifelong best friend.

Wanting to shake off his nerves and have something to do before they will leave this room, John goes over to where Freddie is sitting.

“You feeling alright there, Freddie?” he asks, sitting down next to the singer.

“I’m fine, just haven’t had much sleep last night.” At that, Freddie lets out a yawn. He grins at John. “Don’t you worry there, Deacy. Are you alright as well?”

“I’m fine, as far as I can tell,” John answers with a shrug.

“It’s going to be a riotous mob that we’ll meet when we go there,” Freddie says.

“I can imagine so.”

They stayed silent for a bit, watching at what Adam, Brian, and Roger are doing before Freddie speaks up once more.

“Are you sure you want to go in with us?” Freddie asks, looking at John face to face. Even now, despite their current age gap, Freddie is still looking after him like an older brother. There is a second question in there as well, left unspoken, but it is there and it did not have to be said out loud for John to know what that second question is.

Are you sure you really want to return to Queen?

It is funny that only now that someone is asking him this question, for John himself has been asking this same question over and over ever since he physically reunited with his old friends. Is he really sure that he wants to go through with this?

If this had been asked a month ago, John’s answer would have been different.

The John Deacon from more than a month ago was expecting that he will live his life in peace, to grow old with Veronica together, and have their kids pick a good retirement home for them to live out the rest of their lives. But things have changed ever since Freddie came back. Now he is physically turning aging back to being young again alongside his bandmates while hoping that their spouses will be as well. Now his children would no longer have to put him in a retirement home, for he will potentially live far longer than he had expected.

There are so many opportunities now open back for him. With his finances healthy and will keep him going for a lifetime, he can do whatever he wishes to do. Hell, he can even go back to college and find out how much engineering classes have changed compared to when he first attended college.
And here is, being asked and asking himself over and over of this very question: does he really want to be back with Queen? And there is already an answer that John has prepared for such a question.

“I’m sure, Freddie. And to be honest, after twenty years, I was getting bored of retirement anyways.”

What John said is the honest truth. He has largely fulfilled the role that he has done as a father. He has seen his children having all grown up and he is proud to see them each forge their own path while still remain close to one another. He is happier still to know that he can now live a lot longer to be able to continue to watch them grow and mature.

As much as John tries to deny it at first, when Veronica sat down next to him, to tell him that she knows and has seen through him, that was when John is finally able to accept that this is the calling that he can no longer ignore. After seeing Freddie again and meeting his old bandmates, he has been itching to be a musician once more.

There is a spark of mischief behind John’s eyes and a sly smirk. “Plus, I want to see the faces of those journalists when we give them one hell of an announcement.”

“Oh, they will get a hell of a shock when they see my beautiful face,” Freddie smirks back with confidence.

After a few chuckles, John looks down and takes a deep breath.

“I meant it in what I’ve said, Freddie. I wanted to come back because after all these years, I really missed playing with Queen again,” he confesses. “I tried to stay on like Brian and Roger did and keep to your promise, but it just wasn’t the same without you, Freddie.”

“Oh, Deacy.”

Receiving a hug from Freddie is something that John will never get enough of and it will be a long time before he ever decides that he can get tired from it.

“You’ve done more than enough and I won’t fault you for that,” Freddie says. “I never will.”

“Thank you, Freddie,” John replies, smiling. When they pull out of the hug, John lets out a cough. “So, um, have you got your speech notes memorised?”

“I got the important parts memorised,” Freddie assures him. “Although I still wished that we could’ve added in that the three of you are turning young just to see how those journalists will handle it on top of everything.”

They know that the announcement of Freddie’s return and Queen’s reunion is more important for now. Although the news of the three original members of Queen becoming young again is just as important as the former two, it will take some time before someone will notice anything different on either one of the three men. Other than the dark hair growing on John’s head, the age reversing effects are still too subtle to be fully noticed yet. So for now, they are treating this as one of those ‘cross that bridge when we get there’ situation.

An assistant comes in to inform them that they have five minutes left. They all start to stand up and look at each other.
“It’s time now,” Freddie starts. “At least I have more to say in how I am and you’re all here. I have a little speech before we go.”

They all look at him expectantly, curious of what the singer wants to say.

“The anonymity that I lived through was good while it lasted, my dear friends. It’s time that we face the spotlight and stand beneath it with confidence.”

At that, they all nod in agreement.

“And when they start to ask questions, no matter how irritating they can be, we must keep our vulgarity down.”

“You mean that you should keep your vulgarity down when they start asking questions,” Roger iterates, causing the others -including John- to get a few chuckles out of it.

Freddie keeps a poker face and does not reply back.

The assistant knocks and enters the room once more, this time expecting them to follow her to the press room.

“Ready, Freddie?” Adam asks with a cheeky grin.

“They won’t know what will hit them,” Freddie says with a smirk, putting on his aviator sunglasses.

He steps foot through the door and walks down the hallway, ready to enter the room with flashing lights. It is a path with no return. John follows along and does not turn back, and neither did his bandmates.

Elsewhere, a few individuals are in a house, sitting around on sofas and armchairs in the living room. In a few minutes soon, like their counterparts, they will have to post the truth onto their social media network.

The publicist for Orion already had prepared a post and video to be posted on the band’s main account and their individual accounts, in English and Japanese. Now all it takes is a press of a button and the truth that they have hidden in secret from the world since late August will be finally revealed to the public to see.

“The secrecy was good while it lasted,” Corvo says in Japanese with a wistful sigh.

“You sound as if you wished that it went on longer,” Till says.

“I wouldn’t have wished for that,” Corvo retorts back. “That would just make our lives harder than necessary.”

“I’m just relieved that we no longer have to keep on with the secret,” Haru confesses, holding his stomach. Corvo pats his shoulder in sympathy. The young guitarist often gets a stomach ache whenever he gets too nervous.
“It’s for the better that they’re doing this press release,” Link says, keeping watch of various news websites to see when the big news will arrive and they can finally post their side of the statement.

It had been a difficult month for all of them, but they had managed. Doing all of what they have done is something that they do not regret, as they have gained new friends out of it.

“It’s a good thing that we only have to do this for a month in the end,” Yasushi says. “I don’t know how long I could’ve endured to keep Freddie’s whole existence under wraps. How can you stand doing this?” the bassist asks the singer.

“I’m just that good at it and you get used to it,” Corvo replies coolly.

For Corvo, it is not unfamiliar for him to have to keep certain information that he has in his possession to be kept in secrecy. The skill has benefited his life and career as a musician, especially when they have things such as upcoming album releases or tour dates and have to avoid any sort of leaks. It is not unfamiliar for his bandmates to keep secrets as well, but not to the extent that Corvo does. Keeping Freddie’s return a secret was a bigger undertaking than what they are used to.

The experience for them all has been nerve wracking, to say the least. Not just for the members of Orion themselves, but also for their manager and their stage crew. They had a few close calls, but fortunately those were quickly dealt with and those responsible were reprimanded.

“I can already imagine how my brother would be upset at me,” Haru says with a grimace at what his older twin brother would say to him.

“Since you’ve mentioned your brother, it does make me wonder. How many of our friends and family would want to kill us for keeping this huge secret from them for a month?” Corvo muses, sparked with curiosity by the guitarist’s topic. Then he starts to really think about it and he turns to Link. “Link, how soon can we pack up and get on the next flight for New York?”

Link does not reply back, but he does ring up their manager to start their plan of escape.

As for Corvo, he sends a text message to his boyfriend. Ed will get a pleasant surprise that he will be in America with his bandmates a lot earlier than intended.
Hello! I apologise for my absence for the past month as I've been busy with my life, so it made finishing this chapter an arduous task for me. With that said, do read and enjoy this latest chapter! If you liked it, leave a kudos or a comment!

“Ever since we’ve received news that Freddie Mercury is alive and back from the dead with a youthful appearance—”

“It seems that many are still struggling to come to grips that the original singer of Queen is confirmed to be alive—”

“Video footage taken from Reading Festival where the band Orion was performing the very night that Mr Mercury returned—”

“The Japanese rock band has released statements and videos of Freddie singing with the band on their social media accounts to confirm the truth that they’ve held back since the festival—”

“While fans are overjoyed that the legendary singer is back—”

“He isn’t Freddie Mercury! He’s a fake!”

“Despite accusations of this Freddie Mercury being an impersonator, evidence has shown otherwise —”

“After seeking out for answers, the British government has confirmed that Freddie Mercury is indeed alive and back for real due to documented evidence—”

“Regardless of what the others are saying, I believe in what the band has said. So welcome back, Freddie Mercury!”

It has been a few days since the announcement. The various news media, both the national newspapers and tabloids, all have their own opinions of how they feel towards seeing Freddie alive again and they were not the only ones to say so. Various social media websites have their own opinions of it as well. It is safe to assume that practically the whole world that has heard of this news are still reeling over it.

While the world is imploding and trying to deal with the bombshell that the band Queen had dropped, the band members themselves are having a much more sedated conversation over tea in Brian’s house.

“The first thing I’m gonna do after I’m fully young again is to get my eyes fixed,” Roger declares.

“That’s your first plan?” John asks, eyebrow raised, stirring his cup of tea. “Get laser eye surgery?”
“It’s insurance,” Roger answers. “It’s just in case that the ones who brought Freddie back to this world and are turning us young again didn’t really fix my eyesight. Or worse, in fixing me back they’ve actually set my eyesight back to how it was in my late twenties.”

John nods, finding what Roger said making sense.

They have also been watching the news, in which Roger has been surfing through the various news channel networks and nearly all of them are still talking about the announcement that the band had made days ago.

“Bah, it’s all old news by now,” Roger huffs, turning off the television. “I just hope what we did doesn’t negatively affect our families for it,” he says quietly.

With the release of the announcement, it also meant that Brian, John, and Roger’s families no longer have to hold back on the secret as well. It can be unfathomable for their children, even if they are all adults by now and have learned of the price of fame from their fathers, to find people responding to Freddie’s return in such negativity. For the members of Queen, however, they have been in the music industry and limelight long enough to be unsurprised by it. In fact, they expect it.

Roger’s daughter, Tiger Lily, posted on Instagram the picture that she had of herself having a selfie with Freddie and her younger sister Lola and left a post to explain how it felt to be able to meet the man that her father had talked about since her childhood and ending the post by calling him ‘Uncle Freddie.’ That particular post brought in loads of new followers and views for her, the last that Roger had heard from his daughter. He has not heard her mention a thing about the negative comments, which he knows are there, just like those cowards are lurking around on the Internet, hidden behind anonymity.

“There’s not much we can do about it,” John says, taking a sip of tea. “All we can do is see how they’ll handle it.”

“Speaking of family, how’s your wife taking the news in that you’re back with the band?” Roger asks to John, changing the subject.

“Really well. Veronica’s happy that I’m back with you guys again and potentially creating and performing music again.”

John’s return to the band has been big news as well that has been part of the announcement and mentioned in the news, but as expected, it was overshadowed by Freddie’s return to the living world. Which is understandable and John did not mind it, for at the very least, it means that his return is a quiet and smooth one.

“Did you tell her about the…?” Roger gestures by pointing at his own face and hair.

John’s smile falls a bit, knowing what the drummer is referring about.

“She doesn’t know about that yet. She knows about my hair, but hasn’t figured out what caused it,” he says with a sigh. “I’ve been checking for the signs on her too. I want to be sure that she’s turning young like us before I can say it.”

“Join the club with me and Brian,” Roger says with a consoling voice. “Even if Sarina’s only potentially aging back a few years compared to Anita and Veronica, I don’t know how to drop that particular bombshell to her either. Or to my family, for that matter.”
At the same time that they worry that whether or not their wives will stay at the current age that they are at, they also worry if the age reverse can also affect their children, all of whom are adults. They do not overthink this problem as much as Brian does, but the worry does niggle at the back of their minds. They do not want to be careless of what they have wished for.

They do not discuss it any further as moments later, Freddie enters the living room, with Brian following behind him.

“Sorry we’re late for tea, darlings,” Freddie says as he sits down and takes an empty teacup and a pot to pour out some tea for himself. “We’ve just finished having all the invitation cards written and now they’ve been sent out by the housekeeper to be mailed.”

Freddie wants a party. It has been an idea that had stuck in the singer’s head after they finished the press announcement and when he is in the right mood, it is impossible to say no to him and it is easier to just agree along with him.

Although it cannot be said that there are no criticisms of what is in the plan.

“You know you could’ve just done it by any method that is faster and more efficient than writing them all by hand,” Roger points out.

“And less work for me too,” Brian gripes, squeezing his sore hand as he sits down on an empty seat next to John.

“I could,” Freddie says, nodding his head. “But then it would lack the feeling that I’ve put effort into it. It would lack the feeling that I’m personally reaching out to my friends and family and show that I really want to see them again in this party.”

Freddie had insisted early on that he wants to write each invitation card by hand. And he did it, with Brian adding addendums after him onto the cards to confirm that yes, that is indeed Freddie’s handwriting, and yes, he is indeed back. And yes, this is indeed a party invitation and do send an RSVP back to let them know if they want to come to the party or not.

“I’ve lost count of the number of cards we’ve had to write,” Brian says, giving his hand a good stretch to get rid of the cramping.

“That’s a first to hear from you, Brian,” Roger says in a teasing tone. “You’ve managed to lose count on a bunch of invitation cards.”

Brian responds with a huff and a roll of eyes before taking a bite on a biscuit.

“I’m not sure I’m at the appropriate age for a party fit for Freddie Mercury,” John quips.

“Don’t worry about it. It’s not going to be big or wild. The party’s just for friends and family,” Freddie insists. “We’ve set a date where they have more than enough time to respond back to us on whether they will come attend it.”

“Are you sure that you want to do the party?” John asks.

“I love the reunions that we’ve had, darlings, I do. But I don’t know how long I can stand doing it one at a time. So I thought that I might as well throw a party. That way, I can get through a large
number of reunions in one go!” Freddie ends his answer with a snap of his fingers.

They have nothing to disagree about it. A party is a good way to help reintroduce old friends to Freddie again. But Brian did warn once more that there will be no wild shenanigans to be involved. Partly because this is a reunion party, and partly because most of the friends that Freddie has are now no longer as young as they used to be. Or for some of them, no longer alive.

“You ready to go out soon?” Roger asks. “I can call for my driver to come pick us up in half an hour.”

“Ready as I ever will be, Rog,” Freddie answers. “And more than enough time for me to have my tea first.”

But first, Freddie needs clothes. New clothes.

He has been given clothes here and there, and he had been longing for ones that fit more to his tastes. He had, at first, thought that he would be given hand me downs from charity shops and, Freddie shuddered at the thought of it, from Brian or Roger’s clothes for elderly men.

He really had thought that he would be given second hand clothes until Brian mentioned that the majority of the clothes that Freddie is wearing currently are actually all new and was bought via online shopping. Or, well, more like Brian needed his children’s help to figure out how to do online shopping, so the clothes that Freddie has been wearing the whole time are not used clothes for old men but rather new clothes with simple, austere designs to them.

That will not do. He understands the convenience of shopping for things online, which is similar to catalogue shopping, but he prefers it more to be able to go out and find out what he wants and likes and physically check if the clothing pieces look good on him. He wants to see what are the latest clothes for sale in the high streets in London.

It is partly why Roger and John have come over for tea, although it is the drummer who is willing to go with Freddie for his shopping excursion. Roger has agreed to come along with him, as Brian and John are busy for the day, Brian in handling some matters related to the band, and for John to sort out a financial plan for Freddie.

Roger’s reason behind coming along with Freddie is partly to accompany him to a city that he had last seen twenty seven years ago, and partly to keep an eye out for him. In Freddie’s opinion, he does not think that Roger would make for a good guard. Despite the drummer slowly aging back, he is still physically an elderly man. It would have made more sense for Freddie to look after him instead rather than the other way around.

Soon, the tea pot is empty, the plate of biscuits are devoured, and a housemaid comes to inform them that Roger’s chauffeur has arrived.

“Are the two of you going to be alright?” Brian asks.

“Don’t worry about it, Bri,” Roger replies in an assuring tone to the guitarist. “We already got what we need to prepare for this outing sorted out.”

“Well then, we’ll be off now, Brian, John,” Freddie stands up. He turns to the bassist and pats his shoulder. “Come by soon again, John dear.”
“Bye, Rog. Bye, Freddie,” John waves at them. “I promise to get your finances sorted the next time I come by!”

Freddie does not have to worry about money. His bandmates are covering for him and do not mind it, and he trusts John fully that he does not mind if there are any delays coming from him.

“Come on, Freddie. You’ll love shopping in the twenty first century,” Roger says with excitement as they walk out of the house, the drummer walking with a spring to his footsteps. “New fashions. New shops. New ways to do shopping. Lots of new things for you to experience.”

“I love these new things already just by the sounds of it.”

Freddie is just about to walk down towards the car when he looks up and sees the tall gate and walls, and then he imagines the paparazzi and their telescopic cameras waiting for them out there. He stops on the steps of the stairs, now hesitant.

“What’s the matter, Fred?” Roger asks, having noticed that the singer had lagged behind and turned around.

“I’m sort of worried. Of going outside,” Freddie replies with hesitation, feeling shy and unsure. “I’m sure that some of you were worried about me wanting to go out and see the world?”

“Yes,” Roger admitted. “It did worried us at first on how we can bring you out to the public and let you go about freely, until Corvo gave us some help.”

“How is he helping this time?” Freddie inquires.

All he knows for now is that the Japanese singer is now busy on tour, having left for America a few days earlier than intended, only occasionally having a chat with Freddie about how he is doing whenever he is free. He also knows that Corvo is keeping in contact with Brian about other matters. Then again, from experience by spending time together, that man constantly surprises him.

“He provided to us a security team.”

“Sensible,” Freddie says, nodding.

“Made up of former military people.”

So there is the surprise, but it is not really that surprising for Freddie. A lot of those who get hired by celebrities and powerful people as security people usually have a military background and experience.

“This is Elizabeth, the head of the security team and formerly from the Army,” Roger introduces him to a brunette waiting by the car who is about the same height as Freddie.

“Pleased to meet you, Elizabeth,” Freddie greets the head of security with a handshake. He can tell that she is strong just by looking at the muscles on her arms and by the strength of her grip while shaking her hand.

“The pleasure’s all mine and for my team as well, Mr Mercury.”

“So this is the security team for the day?” Freddie asks, noticing that there are only Elizabeth and
three others present -two men, one more woman- to make up as their security team. It is not a small number, and two bodyguards for each of them is quite sufficient.

“This is only the quarter of our team that you’re looking at,” Elizabeth answers with a small grin.

“What?”

“The few that you’re seeing right now, Mr Mercury, are meant to be seen by you and anyone else,” Elizabeth explains. “Most of the rest are unseen until they show up in front of me and identify themselves.”

Freddie looks at the security guard, now confused.

“What’s the purpose to have a large part of our security team be unnoticeable?” he asks, bewildered.

“I can explain that,” Roger quips in. “When Corvo made this arrangement, he said something along the lines that the ones that can be seen are meant to warn people to stay away. The unseen ones will be doing the actual job of keeping the paps and the potentially dangerous people away from us.”

Freddie blinks. So this is the surprise. And it is an impressive one at that. If he had security arrangement like this when he was still living in his past life, he would have walked around the entirety of London with nary a worry. He will have to thank his friend when he calls him the next time.

With security sorted, Freddie feels assured enough to get inside the car with Roger, with Elizabeth sitting on the front seat with the driver while the three other guards are on a different car that will follow behind them.

Roger cannot trust himself to be able to drive while talking to Freddie while on the road towards the London. It was no mistake as well, since their talks during the trip have mostly resulted in tears, both of joy and of sadness as they chatter like gossiping ladies.

Most of it is catching up on old times and of what Freddie had missed out for the last 27 years that he had been in the Afterlife. There are a lot of events that have happened that made Freddie sorely wished that he either had lived longer or come back from the Afterlife at an earlier time to witness it.

Although admittedly, he is relieved that he was not present over the majority of the Nineties. Sure, the music and technology that came from that era are amazing, but hearing and seeing the fashion trends and styles from back then is already horrendous enough as it is for Freddie to even fathom if he can endure that decade.

The other topic that they are currently covering is about the upcoming biopic movie about Queen, their own band.

“So how soon can we see the film?” Freddie asks, curious and interested.

“The executives have been rushing around and getting the actors to get some re-shoots with new scenes. But that’s mostly due to the results from the test screenings that happened before you came back. Or so they claim.”

“That’s good to hear, Roger, but when do I get to see the movie about us?”
“We’ll get a special screening soon. Earlier than the premiere, which is on the 23rd this month.”

With the premiere date known, that means that it will happen around this month and he needs to rent or buy a suit for it, which marks as another reason why he wants to do a shopping outing.

Time passed by quickly, and soon enough, they have reached the city centre. Freddie can see that there are crowds walking around and they are large in numbers. London always had a lot of people in the city, it is just that it feels to him that there are more people now compared to his past life. And he had only just revealed his return days ago. Thinking about it is making his hands sweat.

“You nervous there, Freddie?” Roger asks, pulling Freddie out of his thoughts.

Freddie pursed his lips. “Other than the clinic and the government building, I haven’t been outside in public in London ever since I came back. People will know it’s me as soon as I step out of the car.”

“Of course they’ll know it’s you. Don’t worry about it, we got you covered,” Roger pats his shoulder. “We’ve expected for this ever since you decided that you want to reveal yourself to the whole world that you’re back.”

“I know,” Freddie replies. It still does not stop that feeling of nervousness and dread combining into something awful.

“Hey, it’s okay if you’re scared, Freddie,” Roger says, putting a hand on the singer’s shoulder. “If you’re not alright with going out in public this soon, we can just drive around the city, see some of our old haunting sights, and you’ll let Brian and I to pick your clothes then.”

Upon hearing that, Freddie immediately calls the driver to stop by Carnaby Street. Allow the man once called ‘Blind Melon Taylor’ by their roadies to pick his clothes? Not a chance in hell. There is a kind of energy surging through Freddie as he gets out of the car and marches into the first boutique shop that he sees.

He does not notice the impish grin that Roger is sporting as the drummer follows behind him, their visible security team quickly setting up a parameter to protect their client.

“So it’s called a bath bomb,” Freddie whispers in awe.

He got curious of this huge store in Oxford Street called LUSH while doing window shopping, having already bought a lot of new clothes that caught his fancy and had gone to Savile Row to get measurements done and ordered a few new suits. The stuff that this shop sells look very similar to what he now knows they are called ‘bath bombs’ that he had used at Corvo’s place.

The staff are super friendly and helpful, and have not collapsed into a screaming glee of meeting the Freddie Mercury, alive and in the flesh. Which is very good, because he needs them to show him what are the products that they sell to entice him to buy some, although he was already enticed when he walked into the shop.

The products that they make is something that Brian would approve of. It ticks all the criteria that
would make the guitarist happy to support it.

Eventually, Roger can feel that his wallet is screeching in horror as he watches the bath bombs and soaps that Freddie picked start piling up on the counter.

“Isn’t it a little bit too much there, Freddie?” Roger asks, hoping that Freddie would cut down on the number of bath bombs that he wants to buy. Freddie had already made several dents to his wallet from his shopping spree today, but the number of bath products that he wants to buy right now is, frankly, an overkill.

“Nonsense,” Freddie says with a frivolous wave of his hand. “You know how much I love my baths.”

Much to Brian’s later consternation and Roger’s painful sacrifice of several credit cards, Freddie brought back so many clothes and bathing products that it required both Roger’s car and a hired cab to ferry it back to the guitarist’s London residence.

“I love the future,” Freddie sighs happily, lying down on the bed surrounded by lots of shopping bags. For how many times he had said those words by now he does not care.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!