**U is for Ubiquitous**

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**U is for Ubiquitous**

by whyamilike_this

**Summary**

Footsteps scrambled on the landing and Rick turned to watch a scrawny kid half-stumble down the stairs. Yellow shirt, blue pants, and a red headband holding back long brown hair… wait *what*?

Morty came to a dead halt on the last step, eyes wide and glued on Rick. “What – Who’s this?” Morty asked and the voice wasn’t quite right, it wasn’t the voice he heard from every second person on The Citadel. It was a little higher, a little more feminine, and suddenly Rick was realizing he hadn’t done nearly enough research before he’d knocked on the door.

“I’m your grandpa, Rick,” he answered before Beth could make the introduction, his brow furrowing because *what*? How did he stumble across an anomaly like *this*?

“This is Morticia,” Beth supplied, gesturing to her youngest child. “Morty for short.”

U-694’s Morty wasn’t a Mortimer, she was a Morticia. Holy. Fucking. Shit.

(Or the one where Rick τ-314 discovers the trouble of pairing up with the multi-verse's rarest Morty.)
Chapter One

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As a rule, Rick τ-314 didn’t like surprises. Not that it was often something got the jump on him, he was a genius after all - bordering on a god – but if he had thought he’d done his research before he’d knocked on the door of the U-694’s Smith residence, he had thought wrong.

There was supposed to be a Beth, a Jerry, a Summer, and a Morty. Nuclear family, yadda yadda. Whatever. Hell, he’d double checked, scanning the house for the right brain waves that would cancel out his own – the only reason he resigned himself to half-apologizing to this version of his daughter in the first place. His own Beth had never married Jerry; she’d put herself through college as a single mother, became a successful heart surgeon and never had the chance to give birth to her stupider (albeit more useful) second progeny.

But with the Federation breathing down his neck, Rick was really starting to see why all his other selves found a Morty to help keep a low profile. And with no Morty in his own dimension, he had to do the legwork.

Sure, the Citadel had all sorts of systems in place for Ricks without Morties; Morties that had been given classes on how to be the perfect little sidekick or whatever sick shit The Cult of Ricks thought would make a kid more qualified to run with them. Or hell, even if he couldn’t pick one up from the system, there were all sorts of fucked up Morties running around the seedier parts of town; ones who’d lost their Ricks and wound up stranded with planets too fucked up or too evaporated to go back to.

But no, Rick τ-314 didn’t want one of their ‘certified’ groomed idiots or a used up Morty with memories of some other Rick clogging up their gears. He wanted his own, one that had never set foot on The Citadel, one that still thought space travel was only for astronauts and animal sacrifices, and most importantly, one that had never seen their own Rick, let alone any other. After all, half the fun of getting a Morty was warping them in your specific ways, right?

So he was in the market for a fresh Morty.

He’d found a dimension with a dead Rick figuring that was as good a place to start as any. Rick’s got touchy about their Morties – even the ones that didn’t subscribe to the whole sidekick thing. The poor bastard in question had died relatively early on in his life, shortly after he bailed on Beth and his wife. Some science experiment gone wrong. The usual. He’d just invented portal technology right before his untimely demise so as far as dimensions went, this one was pretty safe. No one on earth had warranted The Federation’s notice. The Citadel wasn’t terribly interested in a dimension without a Rick - one that didn’t offer anything outside the ordinary as far as inebriants went, at least - and there was some weird layer of moscovium powder littering the space around Earth that made portaling in a bit of a nuisance. Rick had only found the place because his readings had picked up an unpaired Morty and he’d locked onto the distinct set of brainwaves. He’d adjusted his gun to the anomaly, something that had initially annoyed him enough to question moving onto the next dimension before he realized that this specific difference would only give him more protection.

So he’d modified his gun, portaled in, knocked on the door, and acted like the contrite, apologetic, long missing father Beth had been pining for.

Beth had cried and looked at him with fucking stars in her eyes. Admittedly it was kind of nice.
She’d hugged him and it felt like the last time he’d hugged his Beth for the most part, though this Beth held him a little tighter and her face was a lot wetter. Her hair wasn’t as neatly pulled back and her clothes weren’t as expensive, but that was a negligible change and he’d been expecting it to some degree. What had surprised him was the way she smelled like the homey little suburban house he’d been ushered into – like fabric softener and old plaster - not the sterile, almost medical smell of Beth’s uptown loft in τ-314. He didn’t think that sort of flowery bullshit even registered to him anymore but hey, learn something new every day.

Her Jerry was just about as useless as the one from his original dimension. Older, obviously, and being stupid looked worse on him now than it did when he was a teenager but no one could dodge the effects of time. Rick tried his hardest not to encourage Jerry’s incessant talking by making eye contact.

When Beth called down her kids, Rick couldn’t help the trickle of excitement that slid up his spine, like he’d just put together a new invention and was about to switch it on; it could blow him apart or work like a charm - both outcomes had their benefits.

Summer tromped down the stairs first, eyes glued to her phone. Red hair, medium build. She looked a little like Beth did when she was younger. And she seemed healthy and happy in a way that only the young and truly naive could ever really pull off. When she glanced up to take in the scene, her eyes passed right over him and landed on her mother, still teary-eyed and red-cheeked.

“What’s with the waterworks, Mom,” she asked and Rick fought not to roll his eyes. This was why he’d put off getting a Morty. Teenagers were fucking useless.

“This is my Dad - your Grandpa,” Beth introduced, and Summer’s eyes widened before she turned to Rick, seemingly noticing him for the first time.

“No way,” she muttered, sizing him up with a sweeping glance that took him in, top to bottom. Rick shifted his weight and tried not to glare her down - his immediate response to someone looking at him like that. But he had to play his cards right. He needed an invite to stay. He needed the nice, cushy, rent-free safety of a suburban home with a family as a cover. He needed a Morty.

“Dad, this is Summer,” Beth gestured to her gaping first born.

“Name’s Rick,” Rick held out a hand, swallowing a burp and trying to seem friendly.

“Uh… hi,” Summer said, shaking his hand and tucking her phone into her back pocket. “…Grandpa Rick, it’s nice to meet you I guess.”

Rick softened his scoff into a snort. “Yeah, sorry it’s a little late. I got wrapped up in some stuff.”

“Stuff like drugs?” Summer drawled and Beth flushed.

“SUMMER!” she scolded, nudging her with an elbow.

“What?” Summer said, her tone cutting and flat. “I’m seventeen and I’ve never met the guy. Plus, look at him…”

“She doesn’t mean that Dad, you look great,” Beth assured him quickly and he couldn’t help the smirk that spread across his face.

“No, she’s got a point, I haven’t been around,” Rick conceded, glaring hard at Jerry when he rolled his eyes behind Beth’s back. “I’m a scientist Summer, and I’ve been working on some really – I’ve been busy with a lot of stuff.”
“Oh, stuff?” Summer sassed and Rick fought with the instinct to scowl.

“Summer, he’s already apologized to me, okay? Now will you drop it?” Beth muttered harshly before turning her head back up the stairs and shouting, “Morty!”

Footsteps scrambled on the landing and Rick turned to watch a scrawny kid half-stumble down the stairs. Yellow shirt, blue pants, and a red headband holding back long brown hair… wait what?

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Morty blushed under his intense scrutiny, something he fought not to find at least a little charming, and bounced down the last step to stare up at him. Rick quickly swiped the disbelief off his face and chuckled, looping an arm around her shoulders and pulling her in for a noogie. He belatedly decided it would be wise to treat her a little more gently (Earth society had strange rules about acceptable behavior towards boys vs girls) and only ruffled the top of her hair. Beth looked on approvingly and he figured he had made the right choice.

Morty was smiling when he let her go, a soft flush dusting her cheeks. “Hi Rick,” she mumbled and quirked an awkward kind of grin up at him. He grinned back, floored by his luck.

Morticias were rare. Rarer than giant squids, groflomite anarchists and asatine combined. There were rumors of one on The Citadel - one of the Council kept her fairly sequestered, more like a zoo exhibit than a Morty - and theoretically there should be a plethora of them running around somewhere, but some genetic anomaly tended to wipe them out early on in their lives. Rick had kind of figured it was just another example of cosmic illogicality, kind of like how female Rick’s weren’t nearly as common as their male counterparts. Sometimes chaos wasn’t as biased as you’d think.

But whatever the case was, the odds of him finding a Morticia were infinitesimal, and he’d done it completely by accident. He supposed the universe wasn’t always such a frigid bitch.

Beth invited him to stay for dinner. She said she was cooking and Rick didn’t miss the questioning looks the rest of her family exchanged at the news. He agreed and trailed behind Morty into the living room, the young girl turning often to shoot him curious looks.

When he’d settled onto the couch, Summer and Jerry started firing questions at him like he was being interrogated. Little did they know he had plenty of experience with that from creatures more practiced in the art.

“So Rick, where have you been the last eighteen years?” Jerry asked, trying to sound stern but the impression was more pathetic than anything else. He could hear Beth knocking around in the kitchen and Morty was standing in the doorway between the two rooms, her full attention on him. He grinned at her and she ducked away, stuttering when she asked Beth if she needed any help.

“I’ve been in space, Jerry. What have you been up to? Besides knocking up my daughter when you were both too young?” Rick folded his leg up, ankle resting on knee, and leveled Jerry with a searing
“No offense, Summer,” he added as an afterthought.

Jerry sputtered but before he had a chance to properly answer, Summer cut in, “Space? Come on, we deserve a better excuse than space.” Rick rolled his eyes to his first granddaughter and raised one half of his eyebrow.

“An excuse, Summer?” Morty’s head poked out from around the kitchen doorway and Rick made up his mind. He pulled his portal gun out, fiddled with the dial and shot it at the wall.

He was gone hardly a moment. When he got back, Beth was standing in the kitchen doorway looking pale but the rest of the family looked adequately impressed. Doubly so when he hucked a diamond the size of a football onto the couch cushion next to Summer.

“Ever been to BPM 37093? It’s a star made of diamond, Summer. It’s 50 light years from earth and just floating there, putting all those blood-diamond mines to shame and ske-eeerp - skewing the bullshit prices of pretty rocks.” Summer hefted the crystal up from the couch where it glittered magnificently in the dim tungsten lighting. He hadn’t really portaled to BPM 37093 to get the rock, he’d portaled into the bank vault of a hated dictator on Garffleblarg and stolen it out from under his tentacle nose, but the family didn’t need to know that.

Morty approached, her interest cut between the gem that Jerry had yanked out of Summer’s hands and the portal gun Rick still held in his.

“How – How did you do that?” she asked, her dumb little face turned up in interest.

“It’s called a portal, Morty,” Rick answered, holding the gun up for her distant inspection before tucking it back into his lab coat pocket. “I’ve been traveling the galaxy with this thing, going on all sorts of adventures-”

“And abandoning your daughter in the meantime?” Summer asked, her arms crossed in front of her chest.

Morty and Beth turned on her as one. “Summer, cut it out,” Beth insisted while Morty stuttered, “L- Leave him alone.”

Jerry turned the diamond over in his hands, completely clueless. “How much do you think this thing is worth?” he asked no one in particular.

“Fine, if we’re all just going to pretend everything’s okay, then, whatever…” Summer grumbled, slouching down into the couch and pouting.

“Where else have you been, Grandpa Rick?” Morty asked, following his lead and sinking next to him onto couch.

“All – All sorts of crazy places, Morty,” Rick gushed, ego stroked by having such an avid listener. “You want to hear about the time I got lost in the Triangulum Galaxy?”

Dinner wasn’t the best tasting food he’d ever had. Undercooked pasta and lukewarm sauce from a jar. But he’d also eaten a whole lot worse and it was important to make Beth feel appreciated. Plus he couldn’t really remember the last time he’d had something comparable to a meal so he gobbled it
up and praised her enthusiastically. He didn’t miss the way she had three glasses of wine over the course of dinner but she kept on refilling his glass too and it wasn’t like he had any right to judge. Wine wasn’t his usual but he didn’t want to give Summer any more ammunition tonight to spit back in his face, so his flask stayed in his pocket, waiting impatiently for a moment alone.

Morty sat next to him, picked at her meal distractedly and kept shooting him fascinated glances that were exactly what Rick was hoping for. She was like a puppy, desperate for attention and a little pathetically ignored by her family. He almost felt bad for what he was going to do, but he didn’t let himself dwell on it. Rick’s first priority was Rick and he wouldn’t let stupid human bullshit like empathy dictate his life.

The kids disappeared upstairs after dinner (Morty shooting him interested, reluctant looks as she left the room) while Jerry loudly clanged dishes together in the sink. Beth and he traded stilted attempts at conversation over the empty table without touching on anything truly important like why Rick had left or why Beth hadn’t divorced her useless husband but the silent agreement suited Rick more than fine.

By the end of the evening, Beth was sloppy-drunk enough to tear up a bit when he agreed to stay the night but she hid it by finding Morty and asking her to give up her room despite his insistence that the couch was fine. Morty agreed - a little too quickly, man she really had no sense of self-worth – and he watched with bated curiosity as the young girl careened passed him in yellow pajamas, fluffed a throw pillow half-assedly and settled it at one end of the couch. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the TV flip over to cartoons while he climbed the stairs.

He paused in the doorway to Morty’s room almost overwhelmed by the domesticity of it and how surreal it felt to see a well-loved bedroom after decades of living on the move. Beth brushed past him, collecting Morty’s scattered dirty-laundry and tossing it into her hamper, bending over a little unsteadily to straighten the unmade bed. The room smelled like the girl; like her flowery shampoo, and the fabric softener smell of the house and the salty-sweet tang that must just be her. Beth turned and smiled at him like he hung the moon.

“Sorry, her room’s a little messy,” she slurped self-consciously, picking up a half empty glass of water from the nightstand and cradling it in her hands.

Rick glanced around at the desk littered with incorrectly done math homework, at the band poster featuring a long haired hipster taped up on the wall, at the dresser’s open drawers overstuffed with t-shirts and panties and socks. “Don’t be. She’s just a kid,” Rick replied and immediately regretted the thought.

“I’ll make pancakes and eggs for breakfast,” Beth said to the floor, her fingers tightening around the glass. Rick toed off his shoes and sat down on Morty’s bed, giving the mattress an experimental bounce. A breath escaped Beth and some distant part of Rick wondered if his Beth was this desperate for his presence. He really doubted it.

“So-oough-ounds great,” he said heartily, leaning over and fluffing Morty’s pillows.

“You-” Beth started, eyes welling up with tears again but she changed course before any fell and Rick was grateful for her attempt at composure. He wasn’t great with the whole ‘emotional’ thing. Especially when he knew that tomorrow morning she’d be much more distraught and he didn’t really want to be able to accurately picture it. Sounding cheerier (even if it was forced), she sing-songed, “Goodnight, Dad.”

He smiled at her but it felt a little like baring his teeth. “Goodnight, sweetie.”
She closed the door on him and his flask was in his hand before the latch caught.

This was why he stayed the fuck away from people. They had an ability to make you feel guilty and beholden to them even when they weren’t really trying. He downed half his flask in one long pull and bent his neck until it cracked. Rick was fine. He was good at not being attached. Attachments made you weak and Rick wasn’t weak.

He tugged his shoes back on and flipped off the light, listening to the mumbled sounds of Beth and Jerry settling down for sleep while sipping from his flask. When the faint light coming from the hallway vanished and the soft rumbling of snores drifted through the wall, he silently padded to the door.

It swung open quietly, the short hallway dark and filled with closed doors. He slipped down the stairs to the blue light of the TV illuminating the stairwell, deep shadows shifting with every frame change.

He must have made some sound when he approached the back of the couch because Morty shot up, her eyes round and alarmed until they settled on Rick. She smiled at the sight of him, an unselfconscious grin that lit up her face like it was fucking Christmas. “Hey - Hey Grandpa Rick,” she whispered, sitting up and scooting over, making room for him to sit. He obliged, sliding into the open space and taking another drag from his flask.

“Hey Mo-oour-rrty,” he burped and she giggled like it was the funniest thing she’d ever heard. “Sorry for kicking you out of your room.”

She shrugged, an easy grin touching the corners of her eyes. “Nah, no big deal. I get to – out here I can watch TV and no one can get mad at me,” she divulged, resting her chin on the knees she’d pulled up to her chest, blinking at him. “Couldn’t sleep?”

“I had a craving for some hot chocolate,” Rick answered robotically, turning to watch the infomercial on TV without seeing it. “You want some?”

Morty frowned. “Oh jeez, I - I don’t think we have any,” she answered, tilting her head. “Not an issue for me, Morty,” He answered with a half-hearted wink.

“Then yeah, sure…” she answered, following him into the kitchen, interest written on her features.

“Got any mugs?” he asked and Morty pulled two down from the cabinet, setting them gently on the counter in front of him and staring avidly at the vials he pulled from his lab coat. He reminded himself that Morty had no fucking clue what she was looking at – she wouldn’t be able to tell a fucking advil from a roofie anyways - so when he mixed the chemicals to produce instant hot chocolate, dosing hers with enough terilliam juice to knock out someone twice her body weight, there was no need to feel bad.

The sparkle that lit up her face at the first taste edged him there anyways and he slurped at his own with a frown, leaning his hip against the counter and watching her with half-lidded eyes. “This is really good, Rick!” she gushed, blowing on the surface even though it was designed to be the prefect temperature and stay the perfect temperature. She was savoring it, he belatedly realized as she sniffed the vaguely cinnamon, chocolatey aroma with closed eyes, and Rick hated that he wondered how often someone made her something like this: a little midnight treat just for her. Not very often if ever, the back of his mind supplied immediately and unhelpfully. He could practically see the gleam radiating from every one of her pores, and the delighted, adoring gleam in her eyes when she opened them and blinked owlishly up at him made him quirk up half an eyebrow.
If Rick had feelings they might be twinging.

He pulled out his portal gun and fidgeted with the dial. “Wanna – You wanna see so-ooou-mething cool, Morty?” He shot a portal at the kitchen wall and watched the green reflect in her too-wide eyes.

“Y-Yeah,” she breathed.

“Bring the hot chocolate,” he ordered when she started to set it down. He laid a hand at the base of her neck – jeezus, did all kids burn this hot? – using it to hold her at his side and steer her through the portal. His palm absorbed the little shiver that traveled up her back when they ducked through the green swirl.

They emerged in a field of bioluminescent flowers. The barely-there gasp that Morty breathed somehow sounded louder to Rick than the whoosh of the portal closing but that didn’t make any sense and he chose to ignore it, sitting down heavily (re: a little drunkenly) in the flora. Balancing his still half full mug between his knees, he unscrewed the cap of his flask and emptied its contents into the hot chocolate.

“R-Rick?” Morty asked, taking two steps down the slight decline of the hill. When she turned to him, their eyes were almost level. “What…” she trailed off, turning a slow circle and blinking dazedly at the glowing purples, pinks, and blues of the field. She cupped one of the luminous pods in her hands and inspected it, the soft glow making her cheeks rosy. “What is this place?” she finally asked, her eyes shining brighter than the flowers.

“Cartus Pri-eeeoo-me,” he answered, holding up his mug until she got the clue and clinked it with hers, delight radiating off of her. She took another sip, smiling into her cup. “Pretty neat, huh?”

“Y- Yeah,” she answered breathily. “Pretty neat.” He could read the thought ‘neat doesn’t cut it’ on her face like it was tattooed on her forehead – fuck, the galaxy was going to crush her. “How do they – What makes them glow, Grandpa Rick?”

“Luciferins; a light emitting compound.” She looked at him a little blankly and he thought about rolling his eyes but decided that would be counter to the point of him bringing her here. “Just like fireflies, Morty.” He pointedly scooted over and patted the ground next to him. She took the hint, settling in at his side and gaping at the view.

The sky on Cartus Prime was a muddy red during the day, but this time of night, the pink tinted clouds cleared to a crystal clear view of space; the black stretch dotted with a million whirls of stars. Morty took another sip from her mug and Rick watched her eyes droop a little despite her excitement. He threw back the dregs of his hot chocolate/liquor and leaned back on his arms, eyes zeroed in on the way Morty’s head gently swayed on her shoulders.

“You aren’t anything like what I thought you’d be,” she broke his reverie, voice a little slurred. The hand holding her mug drifted to rest on his knee - he suspected it was getting too heavy for her to hold up as the drug relaxed her muscles.

“Oh yeah?” he prodded, cupping his much bigger hand around hers and guiding the mug to her lips again. He needed her to drink as much of it as possible. It would be better for her. It would be better for both of them. “Beth talk about me a lot?”

She snorted into her cup before he encouraged her to take another sip. She slid a bit to the side and he leaned up, wrapping an arm around her ribs and let her slouch her slight weight into him. “Nope. Never - not even once,” she giggled a little airily, and he was glad she was enjoying herself. “But it’s like – it wasn’t cause she said anything about you, it’s cause she didn’t. Like talking about you
would open up some big black hole…” Morty trailed off and it was mostly him holding the mug as he tilted the last of the dregs down her throat, his other hand on the nape of her neck. A black hole. He’d been called a lot worse but it rankled him for its’ surprisingly accuracy. “It’s still warm,” she said, a hint of wonder in her voice as she licked her lips.

“Must be why Summer doesn’t like me much,” he said just to say something, to fill in the silence with something as Morty struggled weakly against his hold. At first he thought she was trying to pull away and he circled her wrist in an iron grip but she was only skootching down, curling up on her side and pillowing her head with her arm. He used the grip on her wrist to bend her arm against her chest and she let him arrange her without protest. The bioluminescent flowers shifted around her, cradled her body in their soft glow. Her eyes were still open, and she turned to smirk up at him before her eyes drifted to scan the stars past his head.

“Summer’s a bitch,” she stated so matter-of-fact it surprised a laugh out of Rick. When he glanced back down her eyes were closed. “No she isn’t – Summer’s not a bitch, not really,” she mumbled, half apologetic. “She’s just looking out for Mom. But I don’t know,” she hummed sleepily, the hand he’d tucked to her chest dragging through the grass until it found his knee and settled limply on top of it. It was small and the nails were bitten to stubs. “You’re not so bad.”

Her breathing evened out and Rick sighed out a breath of relief. Yeesh that was a little… intense. And Rick wasn’t really fond of intense unless it was describing his drugs, a brush with death, or his sexual performance. He leaned back again on his hands and shot a look to the stars above him, grounding himself in the understanding that this Morty was one of infinite and any suffering on her part was just a blip on the indifferent, cosmic scale.

Besides, he thought as he ran a hand through his hair and fished his phone out of his lab pocket, he had already decided he wasn’t going to sell her to anyone that was likely to treat her too bad - or well, worse than was to be expected. Ricks were monsters, the whole lot of them. Especially the ones likely to shell out money for a female Morty. Particularly the ones who would have enough money to make it worth the faint stirrings of regret already pooling in Rick’s stomach. He reached for his flask on instinct but frowned when he felt the empty weight of it.

Rick scrolled through his contacts and avoided looking at the girl curled up next to his knee, the fucking picture of innocence surrounded by goddamn flowers. Cartus Prime had been a mistake; some stupid, useless attempt to give the girl one good memory with him before she woke up in her new life of fuck-knows-what. Rick had only a theoretical knowledge about what Ricks who liked collecting interesting Morties did with their acquisitions. Did they keep them in cages? Did they fuck them? Did they kill them and stuff them and mount them on their walls?

Honestly, it could be any of the above or a whole terrifying slew of things Rick τ-314 couldn’t even fathom, or more pointedly didn’t want to fathom when he was on the cusp of becoming a Morty dealer. But come on, he had been handed the cosmic equivalent of a needle in a haystack by accidentally discovering a Morticia. What was he supposed to do, keep her?

He had wanted a Morty. To be specific, a Mortimer. A totally normal, massively idiotic, regular-old Morty. The multiverse was full of them. He’d just unload this one - this super-rare, collector’s edition, one-in-a-million Morty – and jump to another unremarkable dimension and start this day over again. He wasn’t thrilled to have to Groundhog the apology to Beth and the subsequent evening, but whatever. There were worse things in the world.

His thumb stilled over Rick ξ-003. Speaking of worse things in the world: ξ-003 had connections with some of the Council members. If he was careful, he could probably pull some contacts from him and be rid of Sleeping Beauty by sun-up, maybe even have some of his extensive record with The
Citadel conveniently misplaced for his trouble too.

But the Council – super rich and holier-than-thou - wasn’t particularly nice to their Morties. He’d seen a few of them, and heard about a few others. Riq IV liked to keep his Morties neatly groomed and well cared for – except they had a uniquely dead look in their eyes that weirded Rick the fuck out. And rumors were that Maximus Rickimus only took his Morties outside the house in chains. He was also the one who supposedly already had his hands on a Morticia but Rick was starting to suspect that at best he had a trans-Morty and at worst he was completely full of shit.

The rest of the Council carefully hid their Morties away and that just sounded super sketch. If the acceptable bar was public bondage, what did they keep behind closed doors?

Yeah… soft pass on Rick ξ-003 for now.

There was Rick ω-132. He ran an underground Morty auction where Rick could sell her off to the highest bidder. A semi-public event like that paired with her absolutely shocking rarity would mean he’d be walking away with a frankly ridiculous amount of money. He once saw a cat Morty go for a cool mil, and those weren’t even that unique; you could probably turn any Morty into one of those with the right combination of DNA, so long as you had a few extra in case you botched the first attempts.

But the auctions were fucking seedy. And guessing from their terrified faces and the vaguely-piss-smelling display cases, Morties didn’t love being caught and auctioned off. It might not help that their glorified cages were designed to look like a generic Morty bedroom in some sick bid at comfort but waking up in a slightly-off version of your room with a glass wall that overlooked a sea of slavering Ricks probably wasn’t reassuring. Plus, Rick would have absolutely no control over who got to walk out with the rare gem curled up next to him. He didn’t like that. He had a lot of enemies; enough that the odds of one of them walking out with his prize was higher than he wanted to gamble with. He didn’t want some bastard-Rick rubbing her in his face every time they crossed paths for years to come.

So ω-132 was out too.

Morty’s shoulders rose and fell, the motion even and hypnotizing, the grass in front of her face stirring with the heavy breaths in and out of her nose.

Rick M-541 wasn’t as big a piece of shit as ω-132. He was a tradesman, an entrepreneur, and he ran with a group of rich Ricks who weren’t too into the Citadel and all that assorted tyranny. He’d even bragged about knowing the Rick son-of-a-bitch that started Jerryboree. Rich Ricks had a tendency to get flashy (something Rick chose not to examine too carefully about himself) and that would be a huge advantage to a Rick looking too unload some highly coveted cargo.

That fashionable crowd of Ricks would fucking love a Morticia to drag around and dress up. He’d get a decent wad of cash for her - maybe not as much as the auction and he’d be forgoing the added perks of a deleted criminal history – but she’d live a life of luxury and there wouldn’t be any need to feel bad about anything. Sure, the entrepreneurial crowd tended to be a little extra sociopathic and that might not bode well, but he could case the buyer, make sure they weren’t total rapist dipshits or murderers or cannibals or whatever.

It would be a win/win situation. Hell, he’d practically be doing Morty a fucking favor. It wasn’t like the Smiths were living the good life.

But thinking of the Smith family back on U-694 was a mistake. Beth would be devastated to wake up and find out that not only had her piece-of-crap father bailed on her again, but he’d kidnapped her
youngest daughter as an uneven trade for the attempt at a nice family dinner. Summer would probably cry, tough as she was, and even though tears were fucking nothing in the cosmic scheme of things, he didn’t like thinking about what that kind of trauma would wind up doing to her already bleak-looking future.

He tucked his phone back into his pocket and dragged both his hands through his hair.

FUCK this was why he didn’t mess around with his family, whatever dimension they fucking spawned in. Rick did what was best for Rick and right now, that meant selling Morty for some combination of money and under-the-table benefits and bouncing right out of her life like the fucking boogeyman. He should have just grabbed her the second he realized what he’d found; before he’d sat through dinner with her wounded mother, before he’d begrudgingly warmed to the acerbic sting of her older sister’s jibes, before he’d spotted that glimmer of brightness in her eyes that he already just fucking knew she only had for him.

God, he was such a sucker for someone who stroked his ego.

He flopped back, tucking his linked fingers behind his head. The two of them had matted down a little nest in the glowing flowers and the blossoms swayed serenely above him, shielding he and Morty with a wall of dark greenery and glimmering bulbs. The stars stretched above him and he sighed loudly, already epic-ly pissed at himself for the stupid thing he was going to do. Fuck, what was the point in being a super genius if you made such idiotic mistakes?

He rolled heavily to his feet and shot a portal over his shoulder, ducking to wrap an arm around Morty’s shoulders and tuck one under her knees. She was lighter than he thought she’d be and he briefly ran the math on the terilliam juice he’d eyeballed earlier. If she fucking died after he went out of his way not to sell her, he was going to be pissed.

The house was quiet when he padded through the living room and not-to-gently dropped her onto the couch, her hair draped haphazardly over her face. He ambled into the kitchen and found one fourth of a box of wine and a long novelty crazy straw. He rigged himself a massive adult juice box and plopped down heavily on the coffee table, absently watching the shifting blue light of the TV cut across the small figure in front of him.

He sucked deeply from his crazy straw, the wine circling through two interlocking loops before careening down his gullet.

Keeping her for himself had its perks. For one he got bragging rights, something Ricks valued deeply and τ-314 was no exception to. How many Ricks had Morticias? He could do a little bit of digging and get an actual number but he already knew the answer was not many. And while having an interesting Morty didn’t really account for much, female-at-birth Morties were held at a nearly mythical level. It was kind of like stumbling across Excalibur. But the thing nobody said about Excalibur was; sure it was one-of-a-kind and your name tended to make the rounds with something that interesting attached to it, but in the end it was only a slight variation of the same pointy-stick concept everyone else was waving around.

He supposed scientifically she was interesting. How did she survive the mysterious circumstances that usually took female Morties shortly after birth? The source of their ill fate was always of passive interest to Ricks but figuring it out wasn’t gonna make him money or spare a bunch of dead girls from their infant fatalities. It would only satisfy that nigglng curiosity and alcohol mostly took care of those sorts of low-grade hang ups.

The straw slurped loudly and Rick angled the box until he was back to getting full sips of wine. He took a break from drinking to burp loudly and brush the hair out of Morty’s face, smoothing it behind
her ear. Her mouth was slightly open in a pout, and unlike the restful sleep of REM, her eyes were still under their lids.

She didn’t look at all like Beth - not like Summer did with her oval face and soft curves. Morty’s hair clearly came from Jerry’s genes; unimpressive brown and just wavy enough to be on the unfortunate side of curly. By Morty’s age, Beth had already been pretty in that terrifying way that sprang into young girls suddenly and without warning, but Beth’s eyes had been hard and smart - almost calculating - and the gleam of danger that had burned in their depths was like looking into a goddamn mirror. It had been easy to walk away from that hardness that felt too much like his own and looked too much like his ex-wife’s.

Morty was different. She was round and soft and so stupidly sweet it gave him a stomach ache just to be on the receiving end of her smiles. The world was going to destroy her and if he stuck around, he would only speed the process up.

But he needed a Morty and he’d be lying if he said he didn’t like the way she looked at him.

The straw slurped noisily again and he decided to forgo it, yanking it out and licking the wine still clinging to its bottom, draining the last couple gulps straight from the box before burying it in the recycling bin – there were plenty of other bottles in there already so he doubted it would raise suspicion. Living with another functioning alcoholic would have its benefits.

He clicked off the TV and rubbed a calloused hand over his face, wishing he had brought something stronger to really knock him out for the night. He briefly considered taking a swig of terilliam but vetoed it when he remembered he’d blown up the planet he’d stolen it from. It was probably some of the last terilliam in the multiverse. He should save it for a special occasion.

He’d almost gotten to the stairs before the irrepressible urge niggling at the back of his brain took over his slightly inebriated body and tracked his feet back to the couch. He glared down at the tightly curled up girl, her arm half dangling off the cushion, knees bent up funny against her chest. The throw blanket was crumpled over the armchair and he grumbled angrily to himself as he shook it out and let it settle over her. “Fucking Morties,” he muttered to himself as he tucked her arm under the blanket and tugged her legs straight so they wouldn’t cramp. “Fucking. Morty.”

He collapsed face first into her creaky twin bed and tried not to think about families or Beths or Morty but it was impossible when the pillow smelled like her hair.

Rick woke up the moment Beth cracked open the door to peek in on him. He was hard-wired to be on the defensive and his self-preservation instincts alerted him to the intrusion immediately. He laid still and kept his eyes closed as the door knob rattled, followed by the heavy silence of someone trying to be quiet. After a long moment the door knocked back into its frame. He couldn’t prove that it was Beth but he knew it was, the same way he knew it was Summer who was taking the too long shower echoing in the bathroom next door and that it was Jerry weed-whacking the lawn - and most of the driveway too, from the nails-on-a-chalkboard sound of it.

He turned over in bed and stared at the slightly dingy ceiling of Morty’s room. The faint dusting of cobwebs gathered in the corners and there was a splotch over her bed where someone had smashed a spider and hadn’t cleaned up the goo.
Staying here was a bad idea but he needed a Morty and humbling himself for one Beth had been agonizing enough. He’d stick it out, see how this universe panned out. He could leave whenever he wanted to; it wasn’t like Rick was settling down for good. He’d stick around until he got bored. And when he did skedaddle, he could leave behind a semi-convincing Morty robot; that way her family would be none the wiser that he’d made off with the youngest Smith and he could rake in a small fortune. His time here didn’t have to be a complete wash.

Absently, he portaled to the off-planet junkyard where he’d been storing his stuff to refill his flask with vodka and take a couple deep swigs straight from the bottle. He kept pulling from it as he poked around at the homework littering Morty’s desk. Looked like she was depressingly stupid. Rick blamed Jerry for that hereditary error but he’d prepared himself for that inconvenience; after all, if she wasn’t an idiot, her brainwaves wouldn’t work as the perfect shield for his and he supposed it wasn’t her fault she lost the genetic lottery.

He opened all her dresser drawers and snooped around inside. Nothing terribly exciting. Lots of yellow shirts and blue jeans and an unexciting selection of panties. No bras which Rick thought was a little weird for a kid her age but it hadn’t slipped his notice that she was flat as a fucking board. Something else she must have gotten from Jerry’s side of the family since Beth had taken after Diane in that aspect. Jezzus, Morty really hadn’t been dealt a fair hand. Stupid as a rock and lacking in the looks department - she was lucky Rick had stumbled across her. Running with him meant getting into some crazy stuff so at least her mind would be expanded somehow.

Judging by the solar system rug, the little model of the Milky Way on her shelf, the telescope tucked under her bed, and the little rocket sitting on her desk, she seemed to be a fan of space. That was good. Rick could work with that. Honestly he’d been a little worried that a female Morty would be a little trickier to handle; what if she was more into the traditional girly bullshit kids got shoved down their throats? He’d dodged the threat of her being into ponies or boybands or going to the mall - dragging her around on adventures would be significantly harder if she wanted to go on dates with boys or spend her weekends doing makeovers or whatever.

He toyed with the little rocket on her desk – a half-assed replica of the Apollo spacecraft pre-launch that she seemed to have made herself from a paper towel tube. He laughed a bit. Building a ship was on his list of things to do and Morty would probably like that. Guessing from the shit in her room, it would blow her mind to go to space and he could practically picture that spark of amazement lighting up her brown eyes.

Eventually, once he’d gone through all her drawers and ran his hand along the edges of her mattress (unearthing nothing but a long lost pair of panties that he’d half-heartedly tossed into the hamper – he’d really been hoping she kept a diary), he had no other way to stall and he ambled down the stairs. Jerry was sitting at the table playing with an iPad and Rick had to remind himself to play nice when the idiot shot him a glare. “Still here?” he asked, the sardonic edge making Rick’s hackles rise.

“Could ask you the same thing…” Rick muttered more to himself as he brushed into the living room. Summer was curled up on the armchair and poking at her phone, the TV flashing some teenage, hopelessly-in-love, definitely-has-a-scene-where-the-hero-saves-the- heroine-from-rape bullshit that had Rick rolling his eyes before they settled on Morty. She hadn’t moved from the position he’d arranged her in last night and he frowned a bit, giving in to the urge to lean over and find the pulse in her neck with one hand – his portal gun gripped in the other.

“Heavy sleeper, this one?” he asked, disguising his pulse check by brushing the hair over
Morty’s shoulder. She didn’t stir at all.

“She’s out cold,” Beth answered turning back into the kitchen. Summer shot him one more penetrative look before she turned back to her phone. “Probably up all night watching TV. You sleep okay, Dad?”

Rick wandered into the kitchen after one more glance at Morty. She’d be fine.

“She slept great sweetie, but there was something I wanted to talk about.” Beth froze, an egg cradled in her hand at the peak of the upswing to be cracked. Beth was so tense he half expected her to crush it between her fingers. Rick took a theatrical steadying breath. “Listen, I know I haven’t been the best father,” Rick’s eyes jumped to the doorway when he heard Jerry’s chair scrape and his stupid face appeared, peeking around the corner. “But I want to change that.” Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Summer’s head swivel around. “I know it’s unreasonable to expect you to accept me, but I was hoping we could try…” he paused like he was getting emotional, “…being a family.”

Beth cried. Of course she did. This Beth had been fucking spit on by his alternate self and the galaxy at large, it wasn’t surprising she was desperate for a scrap of his affection. Starting over with a new Beth - one so different from his own - might not be so bad after all. This one was much more willing to bend to his will, as evidenced by her teary smile, the timid hug she acted like he might reject, and her almost immediate response of, “Yes of course, Dad!”

Jerry was scowling and Rick made eye contact with him when he kissed Beth’s forehead, folding his daughter into a loose hug and petting along her hair gently.

“Now hold on just a minute, what do you mean by that?” Jerry demanded and the way that Beth shifted from teary eyed devotion to frigid-cold-bitch was fascinating and a little impressive.

“Jerry, don’t ruin this for me,” she bit out and Jerry’s scowl softened to a frown.

“It means,” Rick spoke over Jerry when the idiot opened his mouth again. “I start looking for a place in the area. I’ll get – I’ll find a little studio or something and we can, I dunno, make Saturday breakfasts a thing or something,” Rick said, trying to sound like he was thinking all this out for the first time just now and hadn’t woken up with this speech fully formed in his mind. “I’m between homes right now anyways,” he said with a little smile and he saw the shape of the idea burst into life in Beth’s eyes.

“Why don’t you move in with us, Dad?” she asked. Bingo.

“Don’t I get a say in this?” Jerry demanded.

“We have an extra room,” Beth spoke over him.

“That’s my office…” Jerry whined.

Beth completely ignored him. “It’s small but it could be yours if you want it.”

“I don’t want to put you guys out, sweetie,” Rick recited, trying to make himself sound worried but struggling when he was just astounded by how easy this had all turned out to be.

“It’s not putting us out at all, Dad.” Beth sounded like she really meant it too. Like she was excited. Good.

“It is putting me out; it’s literally putting me out of my office!” Jerry wailed but no one acknowledged him (something that truly deeply satisfied the vicious snake of hate that Rick harbored for the man-
child). Beth folded into Rick’s arms again and this time he hugged her a little more firmly, giving her one good squeeze that almost lifted her off her feet and left her laughing.

“I think this is going to be good,” Beth said with breathless happiness, and when she pulled back to smile up at him, she looked more like the kind of Beth he’d always hoped his daughter would become. Confident. Intelligent. Unmoved by Jerry’s pathetic moaning.

“I think this is going to be great,” he responded firmly and he didn’t have to fake the smile.

He helped Beth finish making breakfast, scrambling eggs and marveling at how easy it was to slot into place in a family home when it had been half a lifetime since he’d cooked breakfast with someone. It was kind of nice in a ‘pass me the butter’ - ‘here you go’ kind of way. He didn’t think about it too hard, focusing on cracking eggs and stirring the pan.

Summer watched from a seat at the kitchen counter, sipping at a glass of juice and holding her phone in her hand while her eyes stayed pinned on her mother, smart gaze following the two of them as they plated pancakes and sausages and made idle chit chat. The top of Morty’s head was just visible over the armrest of the sofa and Rick found his eyes tracking back to it anytime he passed the door.

When the time came, Jerry tried to wake Morty for breakfast but she didn’t budge. The look he was shooting down at her was turning into concern before Beth called to him, “Let her sleep, she’s a teenager – she needs it,” her cadence downright cheery. Rick breathed out a slow sigh and spared the girl a glance when he passed her with a plate piled high with pancakes. Thus the Smith family - minus Morty and including Rick - settled down for their first cohabitating family meal.

As it turned out, Beth was much better at making breakfast.

It was well into the afternoon when Morty stumbled into the garage blearily rubbing at her eyes, the indent of the pillow still pressed into her cheek. She’d gotten dressed but Rick could tell at a glance that her shirt was inside out and she was bracing herself on the washing machine like her legs couldn’t quite hold her steady.

Maybe he’d overdone it a bit with the zerilliam. He was used to dosing people with more experience in the recreational-substance-abuse department. Morty probably hadn’t even tasted wine. But if he sold her, every last moment of oblivion would have been a precious gift. So there was nothing to feel guilty about; he’d done it for her own good.

“Hey Grandpa Rick, can I – you mind if I come in?” she asked, shuffling on her feet and holding her elbows like she was worried he’d send her away.

“It’s your garage, buddy, you d-ooouuh-owhat you want,” he answered turning back to the pile of wires arranged on the desk.

He didn’t miss the way she mumbled, “buddy…” to herself in a small tone of astonished reverence before padding over to stand a bit behind his right shoulder. Man, had no one given this kid a scrap of affection? That was just sad. “Mom said – I heard you’re moving in with us,” she stuttered out and Rick hummed a confirmation, focused on his soldering. “And that this is your garage now. For your science-y stuff. Right?”

“That’s right,” he murmured, very aware when she crept another half step closer. He could feel her
gaze on his hands, the motions practiced and sure as he connected wires and melted them into place.

“I – You know I like science stuff too,” she admitted, before taking a quick verbal back-step, “I mean I’m not like smart or anything, and I don’t know,” – she sighed – “like anything, but I might – maybe I could help you sometimes. You know, if you need someone to - to hand you a screwdriver or something…”

Rick set down the soldering iron and swiveled his chair around to face her. As soon as she caught his gaze she dropped her eyes to the floor, a flush just starting to stain her cheeks. He could tell her to fuck off; ask her to stay out of his garage and she’d do it – he could tell she was used to doing what people told her without putting up much of a fight. He could keep their relationship to adventures where he needed her brainwaves to stay covert and skirt the edge of her orbit at home. The twinging in his belly when he studied her self-conscious tug at the bottom of her shirt - as she darted her eyes around the room refusing to look him in the face, at the jerky way she tucked her hair behind her ear – told him the smart thing to do was keep her at a distance.

“Morty, would you hand me that screwdriver,” he said, pointing to the toolbox within easy reach. Morty lit up like a forest fire.

“Sure thing, Rick!” Her smile was a-million watts bright. “Philips or flathead?”

At least she wasn’t completely useless.

Chapter End Notes

This started off as some half-baked idea in the back of my head that somehow turned into a multi-chapter fic. I don’t really know what happened but down the rabbit hole we go.
Chapter Two

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Rick τ-314 was getting restless. The Citadel wasn’t the shining beacon of safe-harbor the Sanchez Symposium liked to pretend it was, at least it wasn’t for him. Not anymore. He’d pissed off enough Ricks to wind up on a fair share of shit-lists - luckily no one with too much pull, but it had been a while and Ricks were pretty good at rearranging the universe for revenge.

Rick swiveled his drink and took another sip. He wanted to down the whole goddamn thing in one gulp, order another – hell, take the whole bottle. He would hardly be alone with that habit in the seedy Rick bar he had found to hide out in. But it was smarter to stay buzzed. It might give him the edge he needed if someone cornered him with a gun. The uppers he’d pounded before he left home might help with that too, though they weren’t doing any favors for his already flagging patience.

He checked his watch again and grumbled, lifting the glass to his lips on habit and manually forcing himself to sip it slow. ξ-003 was always late, a trait inexplicably shared by most of the ξ dimension Ricks – something that Rick wouldn’t normally put up with but his list of trustable allies had shrank when he’d blown up Terra IV. The reality of his situation didn’t stop him from griping about it in his head. It was a crime to waste a Rick’s time. He could have invented a reusable source of energy in the last fifteen minutes. Or biodegradable condoms. Or generally participated in a fucking slew of things more interesting to him than sitting in the smoky dark corner of a bar splattered with varying iterations of himself, all glancing over their shoulders with the same leery expression he was sure screwed up his own face. He didn’t particularly like being reminded of his commonality and this bar was fucking slaying him.

The door swung open and a bright swath of daylight momentarily illuminated the grime coating every surface and painting the floor in big sticky circles. Rick squinted into the light, his blaster gripped under the table until he recognized the slow head tilt distinct to Rick ξ-003.

ξ-003 sauntered into the bar, an easy glance sweeping the corners and exits before settling on Rick. Rick struggled not to sneer back at the smirk leveled in his direction. As far as Ricks went, he and ξ-003 were almost friendly but he could never really like a Rick on matter of principle.

Something behind ξ-003 caught his eye: the man had gotten himself a new Morty. Rick couldn’t stop his eyes from doing the up and down scan that had become an irrepressible habit since he’d found a Morty of his own. The two of them together made a fairly standard issue pair; lab coat, yellow shirt, no noticeable augmentations or mutations. ξ-003’s Morty was a boy, obviously – he frowned at his brain for even bothering to form that thought. He wasn’t quite sure when he’d gotten more used to seeing Morty as a girl; when his experiences had normalized the long hair, the thicker eyelashes, the pinker lips, even though she was the anomaly. He’d only been with the Smiths for a handful of months. Maybe a year. He was pretty sure he’d celebrated Christmas with them. Okay, definitely not much more than a year.

He shook himself out of his thought as ξ-003 shoved his Morty into the booth across from Rick, scooting into the end seat after him. The Morty rubbed his arm where ξ-003’s fingers had gripped him. “Xi-three,” Rick said in greeting, his counterpart smiling ferociously.

“Hey Killer. Still haven’t nabbed yourself a sidekick?” ξ-003 opened with, gesturing to the Rick-barman and tilting his head. Rick pointedly didn’t glance at the somewhat sour pout his Morty’s face scrunched into at the remark.
Rick answered with a shrug and hum. He’d sooner shoot ξ-003 than tell him about his Morty but maybe that wasn’t saying much. “You got the combination?”

ξ-003 scowled, accepting the two beers the bartender brought him and glaring while he chugged one down. “Do-ooough-n’t be like that, Tau-Pi. It’s been ages since I’ve seen you around, and since I know from experience you can’t keep your sti-eeeuo-cky fingers to yourself, you’ve been up to something. Spill.”

Rick rolled his eyes and pounded his drink back, the ice clinking against his teeth. The Morty was tapping his fingers on the table gently and humming quietly to himself, eyes a little glazed. He’d seen his Morty do that too sometimes, usually when she was in class. It made him feel extra justified in pulling her out of school so often, knowing that she was bored. She didn’t get bored on adventures with him.

“Got into a bit of trouble with the Federation,” Rick admitted, figuring a half-truth was his best option. Ricks had a sense for bullshit and the last thing he needed was someone as sleazy as ξ-003 taking an interest in him.

“Bo-ooouh-ooring,” ξ-003 sing-songed, starting in more slowly on his second bottle. “Here I thought you’d finally settled down somewhere.” There was a gleam in his eyes that Rick really didn’t like and he fought off the urge to narrow his own.

“They had me pinned for a while in the Canes Venatici sect-oou-oor. Do you know what they do for fun there? The Venatician equivalent of macaroni art. Noodles and glue.” He burped to accentuate his point. “It gets boring real fast. But a hasty Rick is a dead Rick and well, I’m still kicking.” He toasted the air with his empty glass.

“I keep saying, you wouldn’t have so much trouble if you picked up a Mo-ooouh-ryt.” ξ-003 nudged the boy in question with his elbow, startling the kid out of his reverie. “So what the Citadel won’t assign you one?” he asked rhetorically. “There’s plenty of places you could pick one up pretty cheap. Or hell, go grab a fresh one from some fo-oou-oorgotten dimension,” ξ-003 leered and the Morty squirmed uncomfortably in his seat.

“Maybe someday,” Rick shrugged and pointedly didn’t look at the kid in the booth across from him. “Now are we going to do business or are we going to braid each other’s hair.”

The safe combination was burning a hole in his brain as Rick trekked through the low-income Rick neighborhood making up most of the east point of the Citadel. He’d handed over a fair amount of his own stash of kalaxian crystals in the trade – something that would upset him more if Morty’s presence hadn’t made them significantly easier to harvest (who knew having a sidekick had its perks?) – and he’d booked it out of the bar before ξ-003 could try to wrap him up in any more conversation. Luckily for him, Ricks were shifty and suspicious by nature so a quick exit was hardly out of character.

He turned another corner, steadfastly ignoring a tweaker-Rick and his rail-thin, shivering Morty. He was ready to get off the fucking Citadel; the whole fucked up space station was filled with ghosts-of-future-Ricks and it really rubbed him the wrong way. But it was wise to put some distance between
him and ξ-003 before he shot off a portal home. In fact, it would be even wiser to portal hop a bit, just in case. He wasn’t sure if he was being paranoid now that he had Morty to think of or if ξ-003 had done something to subconsciously set off some internal alarm, but trusting his intuition had always kept him three steps ahead of the crowd.

Then again, it could be the Citadel itself triggering his warning bells. Rick had never been a fan of the place and hadn’t spent much time there since he’d been pegged with a laundry list of crimes he could only take partial responsibility for. ξ-003 had insisted on the location even though he knew it wasn’t smart for Rick to show his dimensional number in most of the nicer parts of town – a familiar if not entirely subtle power play on ξ-003’s end - not to mention Rick didn’t much like going off planet without Morty for a variety of reasons but it’s not like he could bring her with.

Hardly a week had passed after he started living at the Smith house before Rick finally gave into temptation and wound up running the numbers on her. Some smoldering greedy pit in him needed to know exactly how valuable she was. So he dug through files and hacked Citadel computers and stopped at every galactic waystation dimension-hopping Ricks had a tendency to converge in. So far as he’d been able to figure out; there was no such thing as a Morticia.

Of course, that probably wasn’t entirely accurate. If he had found one and managed to keep her secret, it was likely at least a few other Ricks had as well. Statistically there were probably hundreds of Ricks with secret Morticias that they hid from the rest of the multiverse but they were deep underground. Just like him. And he planned to stay that way.

So he never took Morticia anywhere they were likely to run into another set of themselves. There was more space to explore than there were Rick and Morties so it wasn’t hard to do, though hiding her had bummed him out at first - the attention she’d attract would have scored him a few free drinks at the least, not to mention the claim of individuality he’d get to make having found a Morticia in a Mortimer-stack. On the statistical side, a Rick with a female-Morty was one in a fucking million. But he knew himself well enough to trust that once the Rick Clique found out about her, a fair few of them would try to steal her. If the idea of selling her had occurred to him (and he was a relatively stand-up Rick compared to the lot of them, whatever his standing on the finite curve might say) then it would definitely rattle around in the brains of some lesser sorts. Plus, the whole reason he moved in with his daughter in the first place was to avoid detection so showing Morty off would be counter to the point.

He turned a corner and chanced a glance over his shoulder. The street was fairly empty – it was early afternoon on the Citadel and most Ricks in this neighborhood were probably still passed out drunk. Only one set scurried down the street in the opposite direction, the Rick dragging his Morty along by a grip around the young boy’s bicep.

That was another thing he couldn’t help but notice now when he visited the Citadel; as a whole, Ricks treated their Morties poorly.

Not all of them - it wasn’t completely across the board - but the amount of Morties walking around looking terrified or a little banged up or kind of dead behind the eyes always surprised him. Sure, his Morty got scared on some of their more wild adventures but he never let anything hurt her, at least not too bad. And he always made sure to clean her back up after. Despite the shit she’d seen, she still had her blinding smile, and she still laughed at his jokes, and (as long as he wasn’t saying anything too complicated) she still hung on his every word.

In fact, he was a little proud his Morty was so much more competent than the general herd. (The possibility that a lot of Ricks felt that about their Morties only briefly occurred to him and he immediately dismissed the thought because that kind of sentimentality made him physically ill.)
He wasn’t sure whether her more agreeable personality had something to with her being a girl or if it had something to do with him treating her better than most Ricks treated their Morties. He didn’t think he treated her that different. It was good for him that her parents had never been her confidants or he’d worry more about her letting something slip that might stir up tricky questions. He dragged her around by her arm the same way that other Rick had been tugging his Morty. He’d desensitized her to nudity, both his, her own, and a wide variety of alien species. And at least twice they’d been in situations where he was more than ninety percent sure they were going to die.

So it wasn’t like he was coddling her.

Though, some things might have been a bit easier with a regular-old Morty. Those were expendable, in a way. The multiverse was full of spare parts and replacements.

Morticia was different. No one in the universe was special. Except she kind of was.

When the prickling at the back of his neck eased off enough, he shot a portal and disappeared into the swirl of green. He stopped by three separate planets (picking up two of Morty’s favorite off-world chocolate bars at a Nebulon 7/11) before aligning his gun for the moscovium interference and portaling into his garage.

He found Morty with Summer in the upstairs bathroom, Summer chewing gum with her mouth open while she tried to tame Morty’s uneven waves into curls. “Hey Rick!” Morty smiled brightly once she spotted him looming behind her in the mirror and some vice inside Rick loosened. “What do you think?” she asked, spinning to face him once Summer released her lock of hair from the curling iron.

“You’re wearing a dress,” he said flatly, ignoring Summer’s scoff when she turned to the mirror and started fiddling with her own tresses.

Morty laughed, the sound somewhere between amusement and confusion. “Uh, yeah?”

“Observant, huh?” Summer said drily and Rick rolled his eyes.

“Why are you wearing a dress?” he rephrased then mentally shook himself with a burp. “Nevermind, I don’t care. Come on, we’ve got an adventure Morty.”

He grabbed her wrist and started pulling her down the stairs, surprised to find she was putting up some resistance. “R-Rick, I can’t tonight – remember the dance? It’s today,” she whined and he pulled up short in front of the door to the garage. That explained the airy yellow dress; frilly in a feminine way Morty didn’t usually subscribe to.

“I vaguely remember you mentioning a dance,” he grumbled, opening the door and shoving her through it, prodding her towards the ship when her legs didn’t keep moving. “Something about Jessica.”

Ugh. He was sick of hearing about Jessica: the perfect, beautiful, redhead Morty was practically obsessed with. He’d seen the infamous Jessica once or twice when he stopped by to drag Morty out of school. Rick had a thing for redheads so she’d drawn his eye to some extent. She was too young for him to really be interested and there was something about the way she carried herself that struck him as pathetic; she was the hottest girl in a small town high school and the pseudo-importance of that was going to be a strange weight for her to carry for the rest of her life. He’d seen it a millions times before across galaxies and dimensions. Whatever the case, he didn’t like her. He didn’t like Morty liking her.

“Exac – Rick, stop shoving! I can’t go with you tonight, Jessica promised me a dance…” Morty
braced herself on the hood of the ship, round eyes staring up at him imploringly. He looked down his
nose at her and scowled. “Come on, Rick. Tomorrow, I promise, bright and early, or – or even
tonight, as soon as I get back, when – whenever you want. I won’t – you won’t hear a single
complaint from me.” He didn’t so much as blink at the imploring pout of her lips or the glassy sheen
to her eyes. “Just not right now.”

He paced past her to the passenger side door, swinging it open and gesturing grandly inside. “Just a
quick adventure Morty, we’ll be in and out of there in no time.”

Morty bounced on her feet and frowned. “Rick, you always say that,” she argued, “and it’s never
true.”

“I go-ooouh-t you something Morty,” he sidetracked, walking around to the driver’s side and pulling
open the door. He dug a chocolate bar out of his pocket and waved it around.

“I’m not a dog,” she grumbled but he watched the way her eyes tracked the slow arch he traced in
the air. He couldn’t really blame her. The secret ingredient was the Nebulonian equivalent of
benzodiazepines – not that Morty knew that – but her brain had figured out the connection between
eating that chocolate bar and the short but effective reprieve from anxiety, even if it didn’t understand
the correlation.

“Come on, I’ll even drop you off at the dance afterwards,” he offered before folding himself into the
car and quirking one half of his eyebrow. He leaned across the passenger seat to speak to her, and
she took another step towards the ship. “Should I see if Summer wants to go with me?”

She crinkled up her brow and wrangled a pout into a scowl. Rick didn’t fight the urge to smirk.
“Ugh, fine,” she snapped, scurrying into her seat and holding out her hand for the bar of chocolate.

“Ah-ah-ah, door,” he insisted and she grumbled, slamming the door closed. She shot a flat look at
him when the locks pointedly clicked before he reversed out of the garage and took off into the sky.
He handed over the candy once they cleared the atmosphere and they clinked their unwrapped bars
together like they were glasses of champagne before they companionably chowed down.

Sometimes Rick wondered whether he was going soft. More often he wondered if Morty was
making him soft.

Blue goop splattered across his face when he blew the head off the first gromflamite quick enough to
get past his opening barrage of shots. The mostly headless body slumped to its backward-facing
knees and Rick kicked it at his next attacker, sparing a glance over his shoulder to where Morty bent,
scrabbling at the inner workings of a broken door panel.

“Connect the red wire to the yellow wire, Morty, it isn’t fucking rocket science!” he yelled, blasting
two more gromflamites in the head and chest respectively when they careened around the corner. He
heard the zap of two wrong wires connecting and rolled his eyes. “If you could hu-” The door
whooshed open before he could finish complaining and he grabbed Morty hard by her upper arm
and dragged her bodily with him into the hangar. “Oh shit!” Rick whispered when they cleared a
stack of crates and spotted a squad of guards loitering around his ship. He shoved Morty back before
they were spotted.
He took another quick peek: there was a circle of neatly cube-sliced bodies surrounding his ship – looked like the self-defense mechanism worked and the bastards had learned their lesson about getting too close. But the eight aliens left were heavily armed. Too bad for them they were fucking cavemen compared to Rick.

Speaking of which, what the fuck had happened with ξ-003’s combination? It had unlocked the safe but it must have triggered some kind of silent alarm. He’d gotten what he’d come for – some ancient ‘holy’ scrolls a planet of Sectist zealots worshipped – but they were ambushed halfway back to the ship. Something didn’t add up and it wasn’t on his end.

He tossed the stolen gun to Morty who caught it in her forearm with a barely audible ‘oomf.’ He really took her in for the first time since things started getting shoot-y and was disappointed to find her grubby and a little bloody. So much for taking better care of her. Later, he harshly shook himself before digging through his inside breast coat pocket. He tried not to notice the way Morty’s hands trembled as she slotted the rifle against her shoulder, finger held carefully straight and away from the trigger – just like he’d taught her. “Just a quick adventure, Rick?” she snapped sarcastically, voice high pitched with nerves. At least she had the sense to half-whisper it.

“We wouldn’t be getting shot at, Mooorrrty, if you hadn’t tripped a sensor or triggered the alarm or whatever bullshit you did to get us caught!” he snapped back, pulling out a small metal sphere and twisting it.

“I didn’t – How am I supposed to know there’s sensors or alarms unless you tell me, Rick?!” He dove out into the gromflamites line of sight, chucking the sphere at them and getting shot at for the trouble. Morty twisted the rifle over the crates and shot blindly into the crowd of aliens, offering him a bit of cover.

“Duck,” he ordered over the gunfire, flinging himself behind the next available shelter.

There was a tiny, almost comical pop before the air split in a roar that drowned out the screams of the dying gromflamites. Morty braced herself against the crates and dropped her weapon to prioritize covering her ears. “The gun, Morty, the gun,” he grumbled to himself but there was no way she could hear him over the steady groan of wind. When the noise stopped, Rick took a cautious peek at the ship and smirked, rolling to his feet, yanking Morty up with one hand and nabbing the gun with the other.

Piles of twisted, unrecognizable goop were all that was left of the guards. He and Morty carefully edged around them to get to the ship, the white flats she’d likely borrowed from Summer utterly ruined by alien viscera. A quick visual scan showed the ship hadn’t taken any damage and the programmed female voice reported, “Ship secure,” in a calm tone when the two of them pulled their doors open simultaneously.

“PLLleeaarrrbbbb,” something warbled and Rick swung the rifled up to his shoulder. A gromflamite, half his face and torso mangled excruciatingly, snaked his one good arm over Morty’s shoulder, pressing a gun to the underside of her chin, poised to blow her brains out the top of her head.

“Rick?” Morty whined, stretching her neck to escape the tip of the barrel but the weapon followed her retreat.

“Alright, okay, let’s talk this out,” Rick said calmly, more for Morty’s benefit than for the alien holding her captive. Her wide eyes were begging him for help, the edges already watery with tears as the alien haltingly dragged her back away from the ship. Turned out that was his mistake. He stumbled on the gnarled remains of one of his comrades, his torso automatically twisting to balance
himself, the pistol at Morty’s chin shifting just enough to the right and blam. Rick’s shot went through the two open doors of the ship and blasted a hole the size of a fist through the gromflamite’s chest. The gun at Morty’s chin fired with the alien’s death-clench, the laser singing past her ear but missing her entirely except for one unlucky curl, scorched to nothingness six inches shorter than the rest of her hair.

“Or not,” Rick snarked, sweeping his eyes over the room and double checking for signs of life before sling his gun down and folding into the ship, reaching out for Morty across the passenger seat. “Come on, Morty,” she urged her softly, beckoning her with fingers. “It’s okay, just get in the ship, Morty.”

She stood frozen a moment, her whole body tensed like she wasn’t sure if she was the one who’d been shot. The wet sound of the alien collapsing behind her seemed to break her from her stupor and she ambled on shaky fawn legs towards the ship and Rick’s outstretched hand.

“Hey, you’re okay Morty. I’m right here. He didn’t get you,” he soothed, tugging her the rest of the way into the seat and leaning across her to slam her door closed. He turned most of his attention to getting them the fuck out of there, slamming on the gas and careening out of the hangar recklessly fast while the tears that had been building in Morty’s eyes started to fall.

“Tha… That was close…” she eventually warbled out, voice barely a whisper. Rick sloppily smoothed the hair back from her face, his eyes scanning the shrinking planet behind them for any following ships.

“No way, buddy. He didn’t – I had you the whole time, Morty. You’re safe with me.” Once they were far enough away to be sure they weren’t being followed, he urged her to climb into his seat with a grip on her shoulder. She allowed him to pull her over somewhat reluctantly, her posture stiff as he arranged her against his chest, her legs across his lap. Her whole body was shaking with tension and he followed the line of her spine in long soothing strokes, wiping the tears and soot and blood off her face with the other hand.

Okay so maybe he coddled her a little.

But this was the first time he’d let her slip into a situation where she might have died and he would have had to walk away with that burden. Sure, things with him had a tendency to go sideways but the two other times they’d faced death he’d been able to stomach it knowing they’d be going together. But the idea of her dying and leaving him to face the consequences, leaving him behind - he had literally seen red when that barrel pressed against her throat.

The tight hug he wrapped her in was to soothe her quiet tears, definitely not to steady his own trembling hands.

He flew them the rest of the way home like that, Morty curled up on his lap, the heat of her soothing his frayed nerves. Her sobbing eventually quieted down and her fingers started to toy idly with a button on his lab coat. She rearranged her head under his chin, pressing her ear to his chest. Slowly she started matching her breathing with his and it was hypnotizing to watch; their chests rising and falling together. Her soft hair rubbed against his chin and the flowery comforting smell of her shampoo wafted up to tickle his nose.

Jeez, when was the last time he’d had a girl in his lap like this? By the time his Beth was this age, she was too hard and independent to seek out his affections. And he hadn’t really much to spare for her by then anyways. He’d already found out his Beth was one of infinite; worse yet, she was of a less common (but not exactly rare) meaner breed and that didn’t do any favors endearing her to him. It probably had something to do with her mother’s accident but the less time spent evaluating the
differences between dimensions, the better of Rick would be. Even before that, Beth had never been sweet; no she was a chip off the old block – practically a carbon copy that highlighted his flaws in drastic shades of grey; she showed signs of sociopathy at a young age, was smart enough to be more of a handful than he had time for, and eventually she started looking at him with the same growing disdain he’d resented in the eyes of her mother.

He took another deep breath, hitching Morty a little closer to him before returning to his one handed steering. The other hand couldn’t stop the steady motion of rubbing up and down Morty’s soft arm, the extra skin her dress exposed surprisingly novel.

When was the last time he’d had this sort of intimacy with anyone? He hadn’t done more than hook up with strangers for the last – fuck – for the last few decades. Even before that, slightly longer term relationships like Unity and Birdman weren’t exactly built on things like intimacy or kindness. Mostly it was a mutual desire to get messed up and fuck someone into oblivion. Not that he didn’t like them or trust them or whatever. He’d just been around the galaxy long enough to know those things didn’t really mean much and feelings like that could vanish in an instant. He hadn’t really been soft with someone since - well, since Diane – since before he’d seen his own insignificance and lost himself to the void.

Morty was quickly becoming a soft spot, he begrudgingly acknowledged, scowling out the windshield. He really didn’t know what to do with that information and he wasn’t used to being unsure; it left a bitter taste on the back of his tongue. He expertly tilted the ship and a half full bottle of vodka rolled into his waiting hand. Morty gripped his lab coat tighter to avoid being thrown muttering, “Jeez, Rick,” to herself but he curled his arm around her and she resettled. The thought occurred that he should be shooing her off instead of holding her closer (for a variety of reasons) but he disregarded it. He liked the soft warmth of her and Ricks weren’t good at resisting what they liked.

Beth’s car wasn’t in the driveway when he landed the ship in his spot. She and Jerry were out on some ill-fated attempt at date night - Rick vaguely remembered her saying something like that at least. He kicked open his door and handed Morty the vodka. “Ho-ooough-ld this,” he demanded, groaning a little when he climbed out of the car, still cradling her in his arms.

When he didn’t immediately set her on her feet she grumbled, “My legs still work,” self-consciously but he ignored her and stalked to his work bench, setting her down on top of it and flipping the desk lamp on, snatching the bottle out of her hands and gulping from it while his eyes raked her top to bottom.

Her nice dress was stained with alien guts and she must have noticed it at the same time he did because she jerked, her limbs startling themselves to attention. “Oh no, the dance,” she gasped and Rick theatrically rolled his eyes. She grabbed his arm and checked the time on his watch, her other hand bracing on the edge to jump down but he slid his body between her legs to trap her.

“How –uuuuurp- are you still worried about a dance?” he griped at her, turning over her palms to find them bloody. He had to backtrack in the mad dash of their escape to yank her up, shoving her in front of him. It would be smarter of him to run behind her in the future, even though his longer legs could run faster. It would be better for both of them if he kept her in his sights. He faded back to the present when she half slapped his hands away and shoved at his chest, determined to scoot off the tabletop.

“How –uuuuurp- are you still worried about a dance?” he griped at her, turning over her palms to find them bloody. A glance down showed her knees were in much the same state. She’d tripped, he remembered with a little frown. He had to backtrack in the mad dash of their escape to yank her up, shoving her in front of him. It would be smarter of him to run behind her in the future, even though his longer legs could run faster. It would be better for both of them if he kept her in his sights. He faded back to the present when she half slapped his hands away and shoved at his chest, determined to scoot off the tabletop.

Morty scowled when he refused to budge. “What of co - what do you want me to be worried about, Rick? Whatever was in that safe that you – that nearly got us killed?”
Rick hooked his ankle around the swivel chair and dragged it towards him. He sat down heavily and glared at her while he took another long swig from the bottle. “At least it’s a little more important than a dance, Mooorty,” he answered acerbically, holding her shins in place when she tried to scoot away again.

She huffed irritably but stopped fighting him, sitting placidly while he tilted the light to better examine her knees. They were only scraped; they’d heal perfectly fine on their own.

Rick opened a drawer and rifled through it.

After a long sigh, Morty muttered, “Well, what was it then? What did you get?”

He grinned up at her reluctant curiosity. She was pouting. It was endearing. Rick hated himself – but that was hardly new.

“Oh, nothing that exciting for us Morty,” he hummed, absentmindedly dribbling chemicals into a vial and using his finger as a stopper to shake it up. “It’s mo-ooug-re what’ll happen now that it’s missing.”

He cracked the vial open like an egg and a mushy little bulb with eyes slid out. He picked it up with tongs.

“Rick, what the-” Morty tried to skootch away when he smeared the mucus-y bulb on her raw knees but she quickly changed tune when the bloody scrapes started knitting themselves back together. “Ohhh…” she panted out, eyelids falling to half-mast. The huge release of dopamine and serotonin the healing goop triggered in her brain might have had something to do with her sigh of pleasure but he filed the noise away for later rumination anyways.

“Hands,” he said absently and Morty dazedly offered her bloodied palms. Once those were coated in a layer of slime, Rick smashed the bulb between the two ends of the tong, throwing them and the gunky remains in his trashcan incinerator. Morty slumped back against the wall, eyes distant.

“Today-” she started and stopped, then focused her eyes on Rick with an amount of effort the task usually didn’t warrant. “Today was kinda – it was a pretty wild adventure today, huh Rick,” she settled on, gaze dropping to her open palms and the weaving threads of flesh. Rick crossed his arms and fought the instinct to lean back in his chair; yesterday the backrest had broken and he’d just about done a backflip tumbling out of it. Morty had laughed hysterically right up to the point when he’d manhandled her to the ground and locked her in the sleeper hold until she’d gone limp in his arms. When her eyes had refocused from the middle distance, she’d haltingly asked how he’d done that and they’d spent the rest of the afternoon wrestling.

“You were fi-eeeuuuh-ne,” Rick said flatly and he tried to mean it.

Morty smiled back at him. “Yeah, really – barely dodged a bullet there. Or should I say laser?” she said with a smile, toying with her lock of burnt hair like she thought it was funny.

“You die when I say you can die,” he bit out sterner than he expected and Morty’s molten brown eyes jumped to meet his. She was rare. So rare, it would be a crime to wipe her out on some bullshit stab at stirring up a coup. They’d have to be a little more careful. He couldn’t cure death but if something happened to Morty, he’d have to give it the old college try.

“Pshh,” she spluttered with a tilt of her lips but underneath her attempt to shrug him off, she blushed. Rick liked the blush. Distractedly he found a semi-clean rag in one of his pockets and wiped the leftover goo off her knees, examining the newly formed skin with his fingers.

He didn’t often see this much of her legs – she was a hard and true jeans-and-a-t-shirt kind of kid.
They were skinny – her knees a little knobby, really - but they still somehow managed to draw his attention. Maybe because the light chiffon of her dress draped gently over her thighs made them seem more delicate than he was used to thinking of her as. Maybe it was the stupid dress that was making him so touchy-feely, too. He cradled her calf in one hand and gave into the strange compulsion to blow on the slightly damp, reformed skin. Morty shivered and squirmed, and Rick didn’t miss the way her thighs tensed and pressed together.

*Good.*

He swiped the excess gunk off her hands, inspecting them closer and longer than strictly necessary before standing and patting her flank. “Alright, go-oouh-od as new.” He pulled deeply from the vodka bottle and stepped away to give her space to jump down. She did so slowly, her pupils blown wide and her fingers toying with the fraying hem of her dress.

It took Morty a moment to shake herself out of whatever she was thinking and he watched as she struggled to focus. “So you’ll – can you take me to the dance now, Rick?” she asked, brushing at her bangs and trying somewhat uselessly to straighten her nest of hair. All Summer’s hard work had gone to waste and Rick wasn’t above feeling some kind of vindictive pleasure that he was the only one who’d seen her dolled up.

“Mo-oouu-rtty, give it up about the dance already,” he grumbled, unreasonable frustration making his voice hard. He glared at her blown pupils and flushed cheeks. Yeah right was she going to a hormonal teenage breeding ground like that. The rush of dopamine coursing through her system made her an easier target than she already was with her genetically inherited stupidity. “You’re covered in alien guts, your head nearly got blown off *less than an hour ago* and you’re still hung up on *Jessica*?”

Morty cringed, looking down the length of her body at the blue splatters the gromflamite with a gun had painted across her dress with his dripping entrails. “I don’t think it – it doesn’t really matter,” she said, wiping at the marks to absolutely no effect. “It’ll be dark and I – Jessica isn’t the type to care if my dress is a little… dirty.”

“*Ugh. Jessica, Jessica, Jessica.* You’re as bad as a bro-oough-ken fucking record, Morty,” Rick spat, embittered when she recoiled from his approach. Her eyes stayed glued to the floor when he ran his hand through her hair, trying to flatten it into something slightly more presentable, rearranging her red headband back to center. She leaned into the touch when he let his nails drag along her scalp and he resented that the mix of dopamine and serotonin was likely lighting up her pleasure centers like fireworks on the fourth of July. “*Fine,*” he begrudgingly relented and Morty’s lips lifted in a cheek-dimpling smile.

Apparently he was about to send her to a dance. Where she’d be pressing up against all sorts of idiot kids. He’d learned from Beth that a dance could cost him a whole lot more than a party dress and a corsage. Maybe he should start adding birth control to the monthly inoculations he shot her up with. A pregnant Morty would be a cosmic fucking joke. Except Rick didn’t feel much like laughing - he felt like flying to the school and setting it on fire with everybody inside at just the thought of Morty having sex with some dumbass high schooler and repeating the mistakes of her mother.

Eyelids fluttering shut, she leaned into his hand like a needy cat and Rick wondered how long he could conceivably distract her before she’d remember she wanted to leave. Her hand had fisted itself in his lab coat and he stepped a little closer, close enough to breathe in the smell of her hair and the salty tang of her sweat. Her other hand found his waist underneath the lab coat and he was surprised when he felt the graze of her fingers on bare skin when she fisted a handful of his sweater– just a barely there touch – just enough to shock him out of complacency. He pulled away, pinning on a
hard mask when he got a good look at her closed-eyes, blissed-out expression.

Jeezus, was she always this sensitive? He didn’t want to know the answer to that. Except he absolutely did and he needed to be the only one that did.

“Wash that shit off your face and make it qui-” Rick cut short when the all too familiar sound of a portal opening up behind him turned his blood to battery acid. With reflexes hewn from a lifetime traveling galaxies full of people who wanted him dead, he shoved Morty behind his back and ripped the gun he had taped to the bottom of his workbench free, finger on the trigger as he took aim at the two figures stepping out into his dimension.

“Cool it, Killer, it’s just me,” ξ-003 grumbled, the portal whooshing closed behind him and his Morty as he tilted his head and distractedly fiddled with his portal gun. “Some fancy shit you got going on with the moscovium interference, even if it’s in a U-dimension. Took a bit to w-oooug-ork out. You already break into that safe on Zentinium?” He glanced up for the first time and took in the surrounding garage with a whistle, completely unfazed by the man with a gun – Ricks weren’t strangers to being on the wrong end of a barrel. “Don’t know what I was expecting but this was not it.”

Rick could feel Morty shifting behind him, trying to peek around his arm, a fistful of his coat clenched between her fingers. He moved with her, carefully blocking her from view.

“Why did you fo-oough-llow me, asshole?” he demanded. ξ-003’s Morty looked less than thrilled when Rick cut his hard gaze to him, completely willing to pry answers out of him if ξ-003 wouldn’t provide them but the boy cowered, back-stepping and cringing into himself. Rick caught the way he didn’t look to his Rick for help, instead choosing to make himself as small a target as possible without obviously attracting attention.

“Thought you might have something interesting but I guess I was mist-aaauuo-aken,” ξ-003 drolled, rolling his eyes around the room and poking around at the contents of Rick’s abandoned invention shelf. “Really, Tau-Pi, I didn’t think you were this kind of Rick.” He pointedly glanced at the ship Rick had built from Jerry’s old beater and spare parts he’d stolen from the neighbors, at the pegboard lined with borrowed tools, at the stack of laundry neatly folded on top of the washing machine. ξ-003’s face pinched up in distaste.

“R-Rick?” Morty chose that moment to speak up and Rick fought the urge to drag a hand down his face at her record breaking stupidity. ξ-003’s focus swung back to him, his unibrow cocked somewhere between disbelief and excitement. Rick ran the calculations on how this would play out and settled hard into the only path he could see leading forward. He relaxed his stance and lowered the gun, rolling his eyes to the ceiling and letting Morty peek her head around his elbow.

ξ-003 licked his lips and Rick tracked the motion with animal ferocity coiling tight inside his guts. The boy Morty blinked once and his mouth opened in a gape when Morticia stepped around to stand side-by-side with Rick, her hand still gripping his sleeve at the elbow. Rick watched ξ-003’s eyes darken into two black holes.

“Got yourself a Mo-oour-try after all,” ξ-003 said, a feral grin sharpening the corners of his mouth.

“Rick?” Morty repeated but Rick didn’t dare glance down, couldn’t risk taking his eyes off ξ-003 who was looking her up and down, the gleam of greed too familiar to mistake. She never wore a fucking dress - of course she had to be wearing one now, perfectly highlighting all the aspects that marked her as fucking unique. “Why is there…” she trailed off like she couldn’t figure out how to phrase it, “…another you?”
Why hadn’t he prepped her for this? He had taught her how to use every gun in his armory, she
could dismantle a neutrino bomb with her eyes shut, she’d learned how to fly the ship better than she
could drive a car. Why had he kept the existence of other Ricks and Morties a secret from her when
they posed her greatest threat?

Well, he knew why but it was better to pretend that he didn’t or drink until he legitimately forgot and
besides, now wasn’t the time to psychoanalyze himself.

“Morty, meet Rick Xi-three and his Mo-oouh-rtty,” Rick explained, gesturing grandly to the pair still
giving Morty googly eyes. “They’re one pair of many Rick and Morties running around the
multiverse.”

“You’re one of many,” ξ-003 bit back, directing his statement at Rick but completely focused in on
Morty like he was trying to set her on fire with his mind. “She on the other hand…” he whistled long
and slow. “Looks like you did find something interesting.”

Morty shuffled closer against Rick’s side under ξ-003’s licentious scrutiny. Under different
circumstances, he would have put an arm over her shoulder or tucked her into his side but with
ξ-003’s suspicious eyes narrowing into too-happy little slits, Rick didn’t dare.

“Morty, why don’t you take the other Morty upstairs and—” he burped to stall, “—show him your room
or some shit?” Rick ordered. Morty turned to look up at him, utter confusion and something a little
like hurt wrinkling her brow and Rick was surprised when it was boy-Morty who stepped forward
and wrapped a tentative hand around her wrist, tugging her away from Rick and through the garage
door. Rick ignored the way her fingers had clung to his elbow long enough to lift his arm away from
his body and her eyes had darted around his face like she could find an answer there. But he was a
different Rick than the one she was used to looking at. He had to be with ξ-003 hanging around.

When her stupid face disappeared behind the closing garage door, he let a slow grin ease his
customary scowl, glancing back to ξ-003 and cracking his neck, tapping into the deep well of
smugness that seemingly never ran dry. ξ-003’s mean gleam dimmed and he leaned heavily against
the shelf behind him, tilting his head in his customary way.

“Ho-oough-ly shit,” ξ-003 murmured, pulling out his flask and taking a long drag. “Is that what I
think it is?”


“Fuck. How did you find her?”

“Co-oouh-mpletely by accident,” Rick confessed, finding the bottle of vodka behind him on the desk
by feel and raising it to his lips but he kept them tightly closed, swallowing nothing but spit.

“She’s going to make us ri-eееeuuh-ch.”

“Woah woah woah, who said anything about us. You didn’t find her, dipshit.” He shook the bottle of
vodka in ξ-003’s direction.

“You’ve got the goods, I’ve got the contacts. All I ask for is a modest finder’s fee.” ξ-003 sauntered
over and snatched the proffered vodka, topping off his flask before drinking straight from the bottle.
“Fifty percent sounds fair.”

Rick scoffed. “Bullshit. Twenty, tops.”

“How bo-ooug-ut sixty and I’ll try to give her a nice home.” The tone was playful but ξ-003’s blue
eyes were ice cold.

Rick carefully raised half his eyebrow. “Why the fuck would I care about that.”

“It’s obvious you went and got yourself attached to your girl-Morty-”

“Morticia.”

“Morticia,” ξ-003 repeated back mockingly and Rick watched ξ-003 turn that nugget of information over in his brain like a dragon would his gold. “I know myself well enough to guess what happened. Before you could get rid of her you started to like her and suddenly it was too hard to pull the trigger. I’m doing you a favor, believe me: one Rick to another.”

Rick sighed as he mulled it over. “She would rake in a shit-ton of money,” he mumbled and it was true. As true as it was the day he’d found her. ξ-003’s argument was exactly the one that had pressed against the back of Rick’s skull on repeat for months after he’d moved in. Rick had never thought he’d nurse his Saturday morning hangovers on a couch watching cartoons with his two giggling granddaughters. Would have scoffed to think he’d willingly tinker with a washing machine on his daughter’s request. And he was fairly sure every attempt at derision Jerry leveled at him over the dinner table was dragging him closer and closer to a murderous rage. An easy out was a tempting offer. “Fine. Fifty/fifty. And she gets a good home.”

“That’ll cut do-oouh-wn on the overhead,” ξ-003 cautioned.

“Then we’ll call it even on the faulty codes you sold me,” Rick snapped and ξ-003 was smiling when he raised his palms in guilty supplication. “That’s how you found me, isn’t it.”

“They weren’t faulty. They opened the safe and that’s what you asked for.”

Rick rolled his eyes. “Rii-eeeou-ght.” Casually he crossed his arms and leaned against his worktable, one hand invisibly slipping into his lab coat. He had to ask: “What gave me away?”

“You couldn’t keep your eyes off my Morty,” ξ-003 laughed a bit to himself and sat down in Rick’s swivel chair, helping himself to another long sip of vodka. “Wasn’t like you. Your eyes used to glaze right over them,” ξ-003 sing-songed, sweeping his hand in a wide gesture. “I figured you’d finally picked one up and I thought I’d scope him out. But I never imagined you’d move in with the Smiths,” he rolled his eyes when he said the name, leaning back, and lacing his fingers behind his head. “Tau Three-One-Four, living with a Je-WOAH!” he trailed off on a shout when the broken backrest gave under his weight.

A well placed kick had ξ-003 lose his balance completely, sending him tumbling over the back of the chair. Rick drew his portal gun from his inner pocket with quick-draw reflexes and a swirl of green bloomed open on the floor, right in time for ξ-003 and the broken chair to topple into it.

A fountain of blood, meat chunks, and bits of metal spewed out of the portal. Rick raised an apathetic arm in time to shield his face from most of the gore but his lab coat was painted red. “Great, now I need to get a new chair,” he grumbled glancing around as the portal pin-holed out of existence with one more little squirt of red. “Ugh, and he took the fucking vodka…” Rick fished around in the bottom drawer of his work table and pulled out a mostly empty bottle of whiskey. The first sip tasted like blood and he wiped at the splatter on his lips and chin with the clean corner of a sleeve.

Fuck.
Thanks so much for all the positive feedback and kudos!
Chapter Three

Let the smut begin. I've added tags for fair warning so... abandon all hope, ye who enter here.

Rick turned to glare at the sheet of blood thinly coating most of the garage except for a perfect circle on the floor where the portal had been.

Two close calls in one night and Rick wouldn’t call himself emotionally stable on the best of days. He raised the bottle to his lips and swallowed three times before lowering it.

He had to be more careful. He’d really only had the upper hand with ξ-003 because the guy was halfway his friend. They’d been in a few binds together and Rick hadn’t left him to die when he could have – which was really the only meaningful currency between Ricks. But his shoddy acting had tricked ξ-003 because he hadn’t expected much in the way of retaliation. Rick had long ago started letting people wonder whether his ranking on the central finite curve was based on a hasty decision he’d made when he was young; it tended to lure people into a false sense of security - even some Ricks, apparently. Guess they weren’t all made alike after all.

But the next Ricks that found out about Morty – they’d come fucking prepared. A simple trick like a portal to the blender dimension and a broken chair wasn’t going to work on someone willing to off him in a heartbeat to get to his prize. He had to fortify the house – more than it already was. And it would be smart to tag Morty in case she ever got out of his fucking eye-line, not that he’d be letting that happen anytime soon.

Speaking of which, the little idiot was probably freaking out upstairs. And there was that other Morty to deal with as well. And it had been long enough that the two had probably talked and Rick didn’t like thinking that Morty might have gotten the story of their unique compatibility twisted through ξ-003’s Morty’s perspective. Rick would have to have a talk with her. He really wasn’t looking forward to it.

He sicced a Meeseek on the bloodapalooza the garage had become and tromped up the stairs, kneading at the tension headache pooling in his brow and behind his eyes, Morty's doorknob blindly slotting into his palm; the path to it as familiar as the equation for special relativity.

He’d been expecting the two Morties to be in the middle of some pseudo-deep pow-wow, had pictured them sitting side by side on her bed, stammering heads bent close together.

He was half right.

They were smushed up next to each other on the edge of the bed alright, their thin knees knocking together. But the top of Morty’s dress was tugged down exposing her meager breasts, the boy-Morty’s shirt was bunched up to his armpits, and Rick’s vision bled red when he realized the boy’s hand disappeared up under Morty’s skirt. The closed-eye look of concentration screwing up his Morty’s face morphed into wide-eyed shock when she realized their activities had an audience.

She yanked the kid’s hand out from between her legs and scrambled to pull down his shirt but Rick
was upon them in three long strides, pulling boy-Morty off the bed by a vice grip around his upper arm. “Morty, what do you think you’re doing?” he ground out between his teeth as she sloppily yanked her dress back up and scrambled to her feet.

“I – I –” boy-Morty stammered and Rick turned his glare to him.

“Not you,” Rick seethed and tightened his grip on boy-Morty’s arm.

“Don’t” she pleaded, reaching for his arm - the one squeezing the boy-Morty hard enough to have him wincing – but Rick snatched her wrist and wrenched her away, a little noise of surprise and pain squeaking past her lips as he forced her as far away from the boy as he could while still maintaining a grip on both of them.

“You. Stay there,” he said, dropping her wrist to point angrily at the ground and shooting a portal at the wall. He shoved boy-Morty ahead of himself into the swirl and spared her one hot glare before he stepped into the portal to Buttworld. The usually soothing/humorous sight of butt-mountain farting green clouds of gas did nothing to dampen his rage. He threw boy-Morty to the ground with restrained force and glowered down at him as the kid cowered and pulled his shirt down over his stomach.

“Dimension?” Rick demanded, swiveling the dial on his portal gun. He snapped his fingers at the boy when there was no immediate response. “What’s. Your. Dimension?” Rick annunciated slowly, his already spectacularly tried patience shriveling up like a grape in the sun. “You aren’t really from Xi-three, are you?”

Boy-Morty shook his head. “N-n-n-no,” he stammered out, eyes wide as saucers and raking over the bloodstains covering Rick. “Did you - Is he dead?” Rick purposely didn’t examine the way his almost familiar voice and very familiar stutter disinclined Rick from shooting another portal to the blender dimension even though he’d have done that to anyone else by now.

“Your Rick is dead. Now tell me where you’re from.” The brief look of sadness that crossed the kid’s face surprised Rick. ξ-003 hadn’t treated him very well and Rick was fairly sure this Morty hadn’t been his first – a fact he hadn’t bothered to hide. But then again, if there was some sort of genetic programing for needy-obsession, Morties had it in spades for Ricks.

“B - B-thirty three,” boy-Morty finally answered and Rick started programing it into his gun. “But I can’t go back there! We - Rick messed it up so now we live on the Citadel.”

Rick groaned. The blender dimension was looking more and more appealing.

“I’m not sending you to the fucking Citadel.” Rick bit down on a shout. “Fuck, fine,” he shot a portal and yanked Morty to his feet. “This dimension’s Morty went missing.” Rick had found it when he’d been on the hunt for a dimension of his own. He didn’t mention that he suspected it had been a Rick who’d snatched the toddler from his crib before the kid could walk, it wasn’t relevant information. “Just keep your fucking mouth shut about my Morty and stay away from Ricks or I’ll fucking come for you.”

“Wait!” boy-Morty cried, planting his feet before Rick could shove him through. “What do I - what if their original Morty shows up?”

“He won’t,” Rick answered even though it was a possibility. That Morty had never cropped up on any known lists, at least. But odds were good the kid was long dead and Rick wasn’t going to argue with a Morty when he was dying to get back to his own and wring every illicit detail of her foray with boy-Morty from her trembling lips.
With a firm shove and a little shout, he was rid of the kid, the green spiral blinking closed on his new Rick-less life.

Rick portaled back into Morty’s bedroom in U-694 and the rabid animal he’d been wrestling with since he’d walked in on the two of them roared back to life when he found her quaking in the exact same place he’d left her in, one dress strap still hanging off her shoulder. Good. She was smart enough to know she was in trouble but she’d waited obediently for his return. He would have lost it if she’d tried to run. He breathed deeply and took in her rumpled dress and downturned gaze, willing her to step out of line. She wouldn’t look him in the eyes and so he waited, letting her stew in her own anxiety.

He watched her twitch and tremble for a full minute before he finally asked, “What were you doing, Morty?” voice flat and deadly serious. She sucked her bottom lip into her mouth and he zeroed in on the wet sheen of it when she released it. A pair of panties had been hastily kicked under her bed and suddenly he was furious past the point of reason. His mind sunk to the place it went when rage turned him into a sharp tool – the calm, adrenaline fueled, detail-oriented focus that was solely responsible for his continued existence and thousands of other creature’s messy demise.

Morty must have taken his slow even breaths as fading anger because her shivering subsided, hands curling into fists at her side as her brow furrowed. “M-masturbating, apparently,” she answered and Rick didn’t fight the urge to bare his teeth. She cut her eyes up to him and the animosity swirling in the depth of brown ratcheted his nerves up to eleven. He took one step towards her and her well-honed survival instinct kicked into gear, cooling the fire in her look while her bare feet back-stepped.

“You think you’re funny?” Rick asked taking another calculated step forward. She scowled at him but continued her retreat until her back pressed against the closed door. “You think that’s clever.”

“We’re both – he’s just another me, right?” she asked, a wobble in her voice. “There’s tons of me-s, right? Not that you ever told me that. Might’ve – Might’ve been nice to know. What – why’s it matter what I did with him anyways?”

So the kid hadn’t told her how rare she was. He probably didn’t know – how would he, Morties were fucking clueless. He was just the luckiest Morty alive that he not only found a girl-Morty, but one who apparently had no fucking qualms about taking her clothes off for another version of herself. Then again, she was a horny little thing – a trait Rick found oddly endearing.

“What did he do to you, Morty?” Rick demanded, taking one last step forward until they were chest to chest, his neck craned down so he could glower at her. He braced his hands next to her shoulders, leaning forward with his weight to press her flat against the door. Her fists shoved uselessly against his chest. She swallowed, her eyes glistening with unshed tears and Rick ‘hmm’ed long and low in his throat.

“He didn’t do anything,” she barely whispered, eyes locked on Rick’s sternum.

“You’re fucking lying, Morty,” he chided, backing off from her and reveling in the little breath of relief that parted her lips while he trailed a hand into her long hair, gathering the thick rope of it and twirling it around his palm until it was wrapped up in his grip. Her fingers clenched in his sweater when he tugged, slowly but firmly, until her face tilted up into his and she had no choice but to meet his eyes. A tear dripped down her cheek and he watched the glistening trail it blazed over her flushed skin.

“Did he want to see you?” His throat was hoarse from restraint and his voice came out rough. He might not have caught Morty’s barely-there nod if it wasn’t for the grip on her hair. “What did he say?”
Morty’s throat bobbed and another fat tear leaked out of her eye, curving around her cheekbone. “He asked to see - if I would show him my… boobies,” she mumbled, her cheeks turning pink.

“Your ‘boobies’?” Rick hadn’t missed the way she’d stalled over the word. She was shy. It was tantalizing. “And you said yes?” She faintly nodded. “Use your words,” he demanded, heat coiling low in his belly when her pupils dilated.

“I-” her voice was scratchy. “I said yes.”

“So he pulled down your dress…” Rick let his free hand slide up the skin of her arm, barely grazing her with his fingertips as he dragged the thin strap of her dress over her shoulder. She shivered and the breath leaving her nose was shaky when she shook her head. “No?” he growled. “No what?” If he could breathe fire, he would.

“He didn’t pull down my dress,” she muttered, her eyes following Rick’s tongue as he licked his lip. “I-I did.”

Rick wanted to crawl inside her and read her mind, burrow into every little crevice that she thought she could hide from him and claim them for himself. “Show me,” he demanded instead in a voice that brokered no room for argument. Her face screwed up in a pout and her eyes darted to the ceiling. The blush spread down her neck when she squeezed her eyes closed hard. She was trying to disassociate. That wouldn’t do. “Eyes on me.” She swallowed a sob and squinted up at him, tears flowing freely. “Good girl. Now, show me what you did.”

Her hands shook as she tugged the neckline of her dress down, eyes locked on him as she exposed herself slowly to his gaze.

Rick was no stranger to her tits. He’d seen them before of course – hell, he was the one who had talked Summer into taking her out to get a few bras when he got sick of gauging the temperature by the state of her nipples. They were small but Rick wasn’t picky. He dragged the back of his hand along his wet lower lip and her eyes tracked the movement.

“Did he ask to touch them?” Rick asked, voice barely a whisper as he watched her bare skin rise and fall with her heavy pants, her nipples just short of grazing against his lab coat. When she tried to nod again he tightened the grip on her hair and raised half of his eyebrow.

“Yes,” she gasped, tear-crusted eyelashes fluttering. He released his grip on her hair to mimic the touch on her other breast. Her chin dropped so she could watch his hands – calloused and pallid next to her bright healthy flush – as he finally cupped the small mounds and kneaded the soft flesh with his long, rough fingers.

“How was it different, Morty,” Rick breathed into the shell of her ear and she shivered, arching her back into his touch.
“It wasn’t – it didn’t…” she panted when he rolled her nipples between his fingers.

He nosed at her earlobe and breathed in the smell of her hair before drawing back and catching her eyes. “It didn’t feel good?” he filled in the blanks for her, grinning wolfishly at the reluctant head shake she afforded him. “But this does, doesn’t it Morty,” he coaxed, pinching her nipples hard enough to elicit a little moan.

“Yes, Rick,” she gasped and he fucking loved the shape of his name when it was spoken like that.

“That’s right, baby,” he couldn’t help but gloat as her eyes slotted closed. “What happened then?” he asked and her pink cheeks darkened. Rick trailed his hands down, his thumbs nudging at the underside of her breasts while his long fingers circled her ribs, holding her in place when she tried to pull away. “What did you do next?” She shook her head, biting down on her lip hard. He dragged her pelvis forward and ground against her once, the shocked look on her face when she felt his erection against her worth his lapse of restraint. He did it again, harder. “Tell me.”

“I-” she stalled immediately and he dragged her pelvis along the aching bulge pressing against his slacks with a vengeance. “I asked to-” She must have seen his eyes darken because hers darted away like startled birds and the breath gasping out her parted lips started coming in raged pants. “I asked to see his chest.”

Rick stilled, the hands around her ribs turning to claws as he sunk his nails into bare skin. “Why did you do that, Morty,” he forced through his gnashing teeth, his vision tunneling to her lips.

“I wanted... I wanted to touch him.” Oh. The admission was barely a whisper and the furious monster inside Rick started flipping tables.

“And did you?” She nodded and Rick pressed his head into the wood over her shoulder, suppressing the urge to bite her hard. He took five deep, steadying breaths before he pulled back. Whatever was written on his face made Morty cower.

“I was curious,” she almost sobbed, her smaller fingers scrabbling at his hands, trying to loosen the hold. It made Rick furious.

“Curious, Mooooorty?” he dragged out, catching her wrists in his hands and pinning them next to her head. He savored the way it arched her back and pressed their chests together. His sweater was rough, would feel like torture on her sensitive skin and he felt validated when she whined, the noise half anxiety and half something else, something Rick liked much more. “Curious about what?” It wasn’t like she’d never seen a shirtless man before. Hadn’t she seen Rick’s chest a million times?

“I wanted... I wanted to touch him.” Oh. The admission was barely a whisper and the furious monster inside Rick started flipping tables.

“And did you?” She nodded and Rick pressed his head into the wood over her shoulder, suppressing the urge to bite her hard. He took five deep, steadying breaths before he pulled back. Whatever was written on his face made Morty cower.

“It’s okay, Morty,” he soothed, well aware that his tone of voice didn’t match the spoken words. He robotically unpinned one of her wrists from the wall and dragged her curled fist to the bottom hem of his sweater. They both held their breath as they watched their hands disappear under the knit fabric.

Her hand was hot. She was always hot, practically a fucking furnace. And the path her loosening fist trailed up his stomach burned. He kept her arm pinned to his chest until her fingers relaxed, spreading to span the breadth of his sternum, the gentle touch a brand. She couldn’t quite meet his eyes when her thumb twitched, almost a caress.

Rick loosened the vice grip on her wrist to a gentle hold, his thumb tracing along her pulse point as she haltingly twitched her fingers up to trace along his collar bone. It was the most unsexy way anyone had ever touched him outside of actual violence but the little movement floored him, the hitherto ignorable pulsing of his erection exploding into desperate need. Her hand, with his gentle guidance, slid down and her fingers skimmed a nipple, stalling a moment to feel it harden under her
scorching touch.

She was staring at the unremarkable, bulging fabric of his sweater like she was trying to develope x-ray vision and the sight was painfully charming. “My Morty, so curious,” he muttered and her eyebrows tented as she slotted an unsure, innocent sort of look up at him. He gave into the impulse and pressed a kiss to her forehead. It was worth it to watch her eyelids dip as she savored the affection. Wasn’t he fucking lucky she was *starved* for it?

“What happened then, Morty,” he asked, half his attention on the small hands trailing over his ribs and belly, brushing at the hairs below his navel.

She took a shuddering breath and met his eyes reluctantly when she answered, “He asked to see my-” her confidence faded and her eyes dropped to the floor, “-to see my *pussy.*” She barely mumbled the word, the blush dipping past her collar bones and dusting the tops of her breasts.

Rick squeezed the wrist he still had pinned against the wall and her sheepish eyes rolled back up to his face. “Did you show him your pussy, Morty?” he asked, his voice hard.

She bit her lip. “…yes…”

Rick dropped to a knee, releasing her wrists and letting her hand slither out from under his shirt, the places she’d touched still blazing like scorched earth. Down on his knee, they were almost eyelevel. “Show me,” he ordered.

Morty’s palms landed on her thighs, her fingers fistig the soft chiffon of her skirt in white-knuckled grips. She bounced a bit on her toes and Rick laid a steadying hand on her waist. Her eyes pointedly studied the ceiling while she slowly, *teasingly* bunched the excess fabric up in her iron clasp, slowly revealing pale thighs inch by inch. Rick was riveted. Eventually the lower hem was in her hands and she had no choice but to slide her fists up her thighs and over her hips.

He’d seen her mons before as well – there really wasn’t too much of her he hadn’t seen, though she might not know that. But still, the sight of her flat stomach tapering into the V of her pubis, the short-cropped hair just a shade darker than the hair on her head, and the blushing, furtive look she was refusing to show him made *this* sighting so much more arousing. He was close enough to *smell* her and that thought traveled straight to his dick.

“Spread your legs,” he commanded and she sniffled a bit before she obeyed, widening her stance. He trailed a hand along the back of her calves and she mewled a quiet little moan that left Rick reeling before anger burned through him hot and fast, mingling with arousal into one of his favorite flavors. “He touched you, didn’t he Morty?” He could *feel* the glare hardening his features and was rewarded with Morty’s sharp intake of breath.

He unwound the fabric from her fists and bunched up the rest of her skirt in a grip he gathered at the small of her back. He used the hold to keep her still when she tried to press her back against the wall. “I asked you a question, Morty,” he growled, fingers brushing lightly over the outside edge of her thigh. Her body quaked and he steadied her with his grip on her dress.

“He touched me,” she muttered so softly Rick barely heard.

“He touched you,” he repeated, glowering, his hand curving around her thin thigh and brushing up against her lips. She was soaking. “You’re wet.” He swiped up some of the fluid and presented the damp smeared fingers to her. She suppressed a sob behind the back of her hand. “Did *he* do this to you, Morty?” He pinched a nipple with his wet fingers and used his lower vantage point to blow on the wet mark left behind, watching the skin tighten. The hand not hiding her face landed on his
shoulder, fingers digging into fabric.

“No,” she answered behind her hand.

“Look at me, Morty,” Rick ordered and she obeyed immediately when he trailed a thumb along her slit, beginning and ending the caress at her hooded clit. “Who made you this wet.”

Her hand fisted in his lapel. “You did, Rick.”

“That’s right,” he hummed, the jealous python circling his heart unwinding a bit. He pet at her short hairs and applied the smallest amount of pressure to the skin over her clit, his fist in her dress the only thing that kept her up when her body jolted like she’d been shocked by a live wire. She gave up covering her face to brace herself on his shoulders and he could feel the heat of her palms sinking through the two layers of fabric.

Rick gently ran his calloused fingertips along her wet folds and Morty moaned, bowing closer to him on instinct, her long hair brushing his face as she leaned more of her weight against him, her trembling legs struggling to hold her up.

“Fuck you’re so sensitive,” he muttered, her soft pants loud in his ear. “Does this feel good?” he asked, dipping his fingers deeper into her folds and pressing at her opening. If the heat of her hand was intense, the heat of her cunt was an exploding star. She nodded, her forehead pressed against his temple.

When he pumped into her with the first phalanx of his middle finger, one of her hands found the hair at the base of his neck and tugged. She gasped in time with his shallow thrusting, the breath of it tickling his cheek.

“I can make you feel so good, Morty,” he promised, licking into the shell of her ear and pressing his finger deeper, the tight squeeze of her excruciatingly wasted on his finger. Hacking into her computer and watching her bring herself to completion had nothing on the feeling of her unravelling on his hand. The moan forced out of her when his finger sank in to the knuckle hit Rick like a punch to the gut.

When she breathed out his name like a fucking prayer, he dropped her skirt to drag her towards him with a grip on her ass, rutting against her leg like an animal.

Distantly he heard the front door open and he slowed his rhythmic pumping, listening to the sounds of Beth and Jerry arguing on their way up the stairs. Rick rose to his feet, the finger still buried deep inside Morty twisting as he dragged her back against his chest and clamped a hand over her mouth. She must have heard her parents too because her moans quieted to the stilted sounds of her uneven breathing but the hands she wrapped around his forearm weren’t trying to tug him away. “Shhhh, Morty,” he whispered into her hair, pressing his erection against the cleft of her ass and pumping his finger slowly in and out of her tight channel. “We have to be quiet.”

“For the hundredth time, it’s pronounced ‘ah-sigh-EE’, Jerry,” Beth groaned loudly, their footsteps stalling on the landing. Rick sidestepped, dragging Morty with him when he leaned against the wall beside the door. “And I told you not to order it.”

“I thought açaí,” – he pronounce it ah-ka-EE - Rick rolled his eyes and pressed his finger deeper into Morty, stifling her little grunt with his hand – “was some kind of fancy china. That’s why it said ‘bowl’ after it…” his daughter’s idiot husband responded and he could practically hear the glare Beth was likely shooting him. He must have guessed right because Jerry diverted, “Oh look, Morty’s home.” Rick suppressed a growl. The only time Jerry gave any thought to either of his children was
when he needed something from them or wanted to distract Beth from her seemingly endless disappointment in him. He opened the door without knocking and Rick tugged Morty against him tighter to avoid getting hit by the swinging door. “How was the dance…” he trailed off when the room appeared to be empty. Rick pressed his nose into Morty’s hair and finally gave her the satisfaction of his thumb circling her clit. She bucked against him, the squirming pressing her ass deliciously against his aching hard-on, the pleasure zinging up his spine all the sweeter for Jerry’s proximity to his own daughter’s reluctant pleasure.

“She must have left the light on,” Beth muttered, her voice fading as she turned away.

“What about Summer?”

“Staying the night at a friend’s,” Beth answered.

A moment of silence passed and Rick could feel Jerry’s restless, clingy energy sizzling a hole in the carpet.

“Won’t Morty need a ride home from the dance?” Jerry asked and it was obvious from the sound of the words that they were spoken into the empty room.

“She’ll probably call my dad,” Beth answered from within the master bedroom. Morty’s door knob rattled, the sound of Jerry’s anxious fiddling, and Rick sped up the circling of his thumb on Morty’s clit. He could feel tears pooling against the hand pressed to her lips and he kissed the thin skin behind her ear.

“Don’t you think that’s a father’s duty?” Jerry blurted. “Don’t you think Morty spends too much time with Rick?” Rick glowered at the thin piece of wood separating him from the pile of human feces that had married his daughter. Rick curved the finger inside Morty and her hands scrabbled at his forearms, at his lab coat, at his pants, before she reached back with one arm and fisted his hair, the other locked like a vice around the wrist of the hand between her legs.

“Jerry we’ve talked about this before. You know Morty’s never been good at making friends,” Beth stated and she sounded frustrated. Rick pressed his lips to Morty’s ear hoping the amplified sounds of his breathing might drown out the conversation in the hallway. “Their relationship is important to her and him being here is important to me. Now can you drop it with all the suspicions?”

Rick glared furiously at the wall opposite them unseeingly. Jerry was becoming a problem. But Rick was good at dealing with problems. He finally gave into temptation and bit down on the smooth expanse of Morty’s shoulder hard enough that she reared in his hold.

Jerry sighed. Then the lights flicked off and the door closed and he loosened the grip of his teeth, sucking the skin into his mouth and soothing over the indents. At the feel of his tongue, Morty bucked hard as she came on his finger, the pulsing squeeze of her inner walls yanking a quiet groan out of Rick’s gut that he pressed into Morty’s neck.

“My good Morty, my sweet girl,” he breathed into the bare skin of her shoulder as her twitching slowed. She slumped bonelessly into the grip of his arms and he peeled his hand away from her mouth, the backs of his fingers wet with her tears and his palm slick with her spit. “See, grandpa can make you feel so good,” he whispered against her hot, sweaty temple. When he slowly eased his finger out of her, she jerked and panted.

He caught her up in his arms when her knees decided to buckle and he eased them onto her creaky bed, careful not to make too much noise in the darkened bedroom. Once he’d settled, his back against the wall and Morty still mostly curled up against him, her head tucked against his collar bone,
he unbuttoned and unzipped his pants, the leaking head of his eager erection springing to attention between them, catching on the chiffon folds of her dress.

Rick didn’t miss the way Morty stiffened. Even though the dark robbed the view of any real details, he was sure she was staring avidly at the throbbing length of him, her gaze a burning brand.

“Did he show you his dick, Morty?” Rick asked, malicious and quiet, the arm wrapped around her shoulders pressing her tight against him, his hand dipping underneath her arm to knead her bare breast. Morty shook her head. “You aren’t lying to me, are you?” he asked, palming the leaking head of his cock with the hand still moist with her spit. Morty shook her head more ferociously, pressing her face against his neck – maybe to block out the sight of his hand gliding up and down his shaft, palm twirling over the head on the upstroke. “If you were lying, I might have to go find him, Morty. I didn’t hurt him, but I could…”

“No, Rick!” she whispered urgently. “I – he didn’t show me his – The only one I’ve seen is – I’ve only seen yours…” The ugly blackness inside of Rick purred.

“That’s right, Morty,” Rick shushed, pressing a kiss against her forehead and smirking at the way she sighed into the press of his lips, leaning her brow into the touch. “My precious girl. I’m going to take all your firsts.” She gasped against his neck and he quickened the pace of his stroking, hiding a smirk in her hair. “You’re my good little buddy, aren’t you Morty?”

When she didn’t respond, only watched the rise and fall of his shadowed hand, he nudged her with his chin until she nodded. “Yes, Rick.” He groaned and pumped his fist faster, hips gently thrusting into the movement.

“That’s right, you’re my special little buddy. My special girl. Look what you do to me.” He panted as he approached the free-fall edge of his orgasm. Morty shifted and with her position on his lap he felt the way his words had her pressing her thighs together, a new wave of moisture soaking through his slacks. If he had a heart, it might have broken for how desperate she was for praise. Good thing he’d replaced his heart with a cybernetic replica years ago. “That’s right Morty, you’re my fucking treasure. I’m not gonna let anything happen to you, it’ll just be me and you, Morty. Me and you forever.”

He came in stilted spurts, his vision whiting out for a moment in one of the most impressive orgasms he’d had in recent history. In the dark it was hard to tell how good his aim had been but he was fairly sure most of it had landed on Morty’s dress. He caught her palming absently at her chest and even with the dim light filtering through the carpet under her door, he caught the shiny streak of jiz dripping down the small mound of her breast. He slapped her hand away and rubbed at it, willing it to sink into her skin and mark her.

Rick was used to being possessive. He was greedy, selfish, and covetous - and those generally ranked as some of his better traits. But Morty was really starting to bring out the worst in him. Between her rarity and his proclivity for irrational attachments, he was beginning to question the wisdom of his choice to knock on this door of all doors. But Rick wasn’t big on regrets and the thought slipped away as he pawed along Morty’s back, searching for the zipper to her dress.

When he skootched her off his lap and turned her to better suss out how to take off her ruined dress, Morty broke the silence, “How do I know you’re my Rick?”

Rick forcibly stifled the raucous laughter that threatened to bubble out of his mouth. “You’re telling me you’d let some other Rick do these things to you and not question it until now?” He vaguely liked hearing her refer to him as ‘her Rick’ but that thought was followed by a wave of self-disgusted nausea.
“I don’t – I didn’t think about it ‘til now,” she stammered out and Rick could hear the blush in her voice.

“Well do-oooug-n’t worry, I’m the only Rick you’ll ever know.” He finally found the zipper and yanked it down, shushing her indignant squawk when he tugged it over her head.

“The other Mo –” she froze, crossing her arms over her chest and restarting quickly, “- I heard there were lots of Ricks. Lots of Morties too. Lots of us-es walking around in other dimensions and – and going on adventures and stuff.” She turned to him when he slid off the mattress, padding across to her dresser and pulling her yellow pajamas out of a drawer.

“Oh, is that what you heard, Mo-ooour-ty?” he asked sarcastically, rolling his eyes. God, it’s like she couldn’t catch a fucking clue even if it zip-lined right into her pocket. “Arms up.” She obeyed and he slid the shirt down her arms and over her head, crouching in front of her to button it up.

“Yeah,” she hummed, lost in thought or maybe distracted by the gentle treatment, her eyes shining with the attention. “It’s just, I guess other Ricks don’t always – don’t always keep their original Morties.” She complacently followed his urging to stand and stepped into the proffered pajama pants, bracing herself on Rick’s shoulders as he tugged them up her skinny legs.

“Go-ooouh-od thing I’m not like other Ricks,” he replied, shucking off his blood covered lab coat and toeing off his shoes.

“Y-Yeah,” Morty said faintly, and even through the dark he could see the spark of reverence glimmering in the backs of her eyes. That’s right, baby. He turned down her comforter and gestured to the bed. “Yeah, good thing,” she repeated, crawling to the far side of her bed and turning wide surprised eyes back to him when he slid in next to her, but she offered no resistance or complaint when he curled up along her back, spooning around her radiant warmth.
Chapter Four

Morty’s bedroom was dimmer than Rick’s at sunrise. Her room faced the setting sun, his the rising, and she only had one small curtained window unlike Rick’s double that looked out onto the street. When he wasn’t going to bed wrecked, he remembered to shutter the light in his room but most of the nights he made it to his cot he was too drunk and his dead-sleep was bitterly destroyed by hangover inducing beams of light cutting straight into his brain.

When he’d moved in, Beth had been overly-apologetic about how small his bedroom was. And yeah, he’d seen bigger. He’d also shared a studio apartment the size of his small room with Squanchy and Birdperson where on more than one occasion he’d rolled out of bed and hit his head on the toilet.

Looking around, Morty’s bedroom was pretty small too. Summer’s was bigger – which made sense, she was the first born – and most of the upstairs was taken up by Beth and Jerry’s master suite. Morty’s room was just as small as Rick’s. Maybe smaller. She didn’t have a lock on her door and she didn’t have a closet. All she had was one crappy little window that looked out into a tree that no one bothered to trim away from the glass.

At some point in the night, Morty had turned over and Rick had given up on finding sleep without the aid of inebriants. He’d debated portaling to the garage to grab the whiskey but he couldn’t quite bring himself to leave Morty behind so he’d leaned his back against the wall and dragged her head into his lap, stroking her hair absently and wondering at the ability of the young to sleep through anything.

What the fuck had happened to him?

He was used to finding himself in some pretty seriously fucked up situations thanks to his less than stellar decision making abilities but this one had snuck up on him.

It wasn’t even attraction the way that he was used to feeling. There wasn’t anything sexy about the uncoordinated way Morty maneuvered her string-bean body but her awkwardness held a strange charm. She was dumb enough that he sometimes genuinely wondered if she was missing chromosomes but the avid light that filled her eyes when he explained something to her somehow burned away the annoyance of her ineptitude. Most of the time she was a fucking pain in his ass but he was a million times more aggravated when he tried leaving her behind. Sure, sometimes she’d get a little preachy – she didn’t like killing things if she didn’t have to and she always wanted to help people, even if they didn’t deserve it – but her sentimentality urged him into a mindset where he wasn’t a complete piece of fucking garbage; a strange paradigm shift that Rick appreciated if only for its novelty.

He really wasn’t used to liking someone’s company, especially as much as he seemed to like Morty’s. It didn’t make any fucking sense, even if he had noticed a similar trend popping up amongst other Ricks and Morties across the multiverse. It was part of the reason why he’d put off getting a Morty as long as he had. He knew himself well enough to fear his own penchant for irrational attachments but somehow he’d still managed to body-slam right into that fucking bear trap.

And he wasn’t a fucking pedophile except, well, maybe he was now. He frowned up to the ceiling before shrugging. Really, he’d done worse things. And peripherally some part of him had been running out the clock, a distant wire in his brain counting down her slide into adulthood. At some point the inevitability of his curiosity was doomed to lead him here but he had thought she’d be a little bit older.
But then she’d made him so mad. She was his stupid little assistant. His buddy. His secret treasure to hoard. And Rick really didn’t like sharing.

He’d been peripherally worried about Jessica (even though he doubted Morticia had a chance – the red-head didn’t seem like the kind of girl who’d do anything more than chaste, public kissing with another girl more for her boyfriend’s benefit than her own) but never in his wildest dreams had he expected Morty to throw herself at another Morty - the first Morty she fucking saw. Good to know that nagging pit of worms that had demanded he keep the truth of their multiplicity from her was well founded. And he hadn’t pegged her to be into the whole selfcest thing but he’d be lying if he didn’t say the revelation was surprising and a little intriguing. Thinking about that boy’s hand up her skirt still boiled his fucking blood but it was good to know she was open-minded. It took a lot to keep up with Rick and things would move more smoothly if she was willing to be adventurous.

Because the truth was wherever this new interest in her had come from, he knew himself well enough to acknowledge this was only the beginning. He was obsessive and controlling and now that he thought about it, so many of the lines of their relationship already skirted the edges of his sexual preferences. He wasn’t done with her; despite the plethora of reasons why he shouldn’t pursue this any further than they’d already gone, there was no point in lying to himself about his own toxic nature.

Morty shifted in her sleep, rubbing her face against the rough knit of Rick’s sweater and frowning. She kicked her legs out of the covers and slung one of them over Rick’s. Her pajama top had ridden up, likely from when he’d spent the time between one and two ‘o’clock in the morning trailing his fingers over the soft skin of her back. It had been a long time since Rick had watched over someone while they slept in a way that didn’t indicate immediate danger and the comfortable picture she made at his side was intoxicating in a novel sort of way.

Now he just had to make sure she didn’t freak out. Problem was Morty was very prone to freaking out. Yesterday had been a big day for her and he had already resigned himself to some sort of emotional fallout. Between the heist-gone-wrong and her first face-to-face with another Rick and Morty and then the whole fingering thing she’d been thrown more than her little Morty brain was used to processing.

He still had to figure out exactly what she’d been told about the alternate Ricks and he still had to make sure she wasn’t likely to open her mouth and blab about what they’d done together. He doubted Beth would believe her – this version of his daughter was depressingly tied around his finger – but the rest of the family wasn’t so likely to openly disregard Morty should she tell them he’d had his finger up inside her. Hell, Jerry would be thrilled to finally have a valid excuse to kick Rick out, even if the cost was his daughter’s first shared sexual experience.

Speaking of which, Jerry was an idiot - too much of an idiot to really be on the right track about Rick – but now that things with Morty had changed, any suspicions, even those blindly lobbed in his direction, could lead to some real problems.

After all, it wasn’t like Jerry was actually worried about his daughter. If he were, Rick could begrudgingly respect that, if only a little. But it wasn’t concern for Morty that motivated Jerry; it was just that she happened to be on the mile long list of things Jerry liked to use to garner sympathy. Rick had seen Jerry flatly refuse to take her out for ice cream without even looking up from his phone and then turn around and whine that she never had time for him once Rick gave into her quiet, unintentional pouting.

It was some of the sloppiest manipulation techniques Rick had ever seen and he didn’t relish the pathetic competition.
Plus Jerry’s sniveling had been worming its way under his skin; the idiot had been unemployed since he’d gotten inadvertently hauled along with Rick into some Zigerion scam and now he haunted the house like a loser ghost, springing up at the worst times, interfering with adventures and generally getting in the way. And with the evenings’ earlier invasion by another Rick – *fuck, he should have just killed that boy-Morty and tied off that loose string* – the likelihood of Jerry inadvertently endangering them was a real and actual problem.

When he’d relented to the idea of moving into the Smith house, he’d told himself the past was behind him. But if Jerry was so determined to *push* him, then Rick could hardly be blamed for breaking.

At around seven, Morty finally seemed to wake up enough when she turned over that he figured he could take the opportunity to sneak out of her room. When bleary brown eyes blinked up at him, he scooted out from under the covers and smoothed the hair off her forehead, the gesture sending her eyes fluttering closed.

“Wha – do we need to go somewhere?” she asked, her voice creaky with sleep as she struggled to sit up.

“You go back to sleep,” he murmured into her hair and he caught the flash of insecurity that flickered in the depths of her eyes. “How ’bout I cook you breakfast later? How does that sound, buddy?”

She squinted up at him briefly and a blush dusted her cheeks. “French toast?” she asked, sleepy and hesitant. Rick frowned at his own foolishness for thinking the tone had a certain charm.

Rick quirked half his eyebrow and narrowed his eyes. “I fucking spoil you.” He ruffled her hair and felt her eyes on his back as he crept to her door, dodging the creaky spot in front of her desk and swiping up her ruined dress. The last look he got of her, she was hugging her pillow and staring at him like she wanted to dig a fist inside his chest and steal his heart.

That early on a Sunday, the house was dead. It was easy to slip into the shower unnoticed; less easy to acknowledge that he was a little disappointed to wash the smell of Morty from his skin. It didn’t help that he hadn’t fucked around with someone for a while. Too fucking long, really. He hadn’t been lying when he’d told ξ-003 that he’d spent some time trapped on Canes Venatici. That sector was vanilla when it came to sex; when it came to everything really. Of course he’d figured out ways to get off but those romps were *nothing* compared to last night.

Last night had awoken a part of himself that he had forced to slumber for nearly half a century. Attachments were dangerous. They could be used to hurt him and inevitably tie him down and Rick spent most of his time avoiding that sort of responsibility. But now, *now he knew what she looked like when she came undone*. Now he *owned* a part of her and he didn’t want anyone else to touch it.

He ran into Summer sneaking in the front door on his way down the stairs to his room. He had elected not to put on his bloody, stained, and foul clothes from the night before so he’d wrapped them around Morty’s conspicuous yellow dress and descended the stairs in a towel. Summer grimaced at him as if his bare chest were a crime.

“Ho-ouuh-w was the dance?” he asked, taking in the crumpled pink dress she’d worn the night before and the makeup smeared under her eyes. “How was the ’sleep over’?”

Summer shot him with the sharp, nihilistic look that she’d somehow perfected and that he had really warmed up too. Summer didn’t put up with shit and he respected her for that – she’d be able to take care of herself; already mostly did. She wasn’t so bad on an adventure either. Morty was still preferable but that was beside the point.
“I’ve had better,” she answered caustically. She met him raised eyebrow for half raised unibrow and fired back, “Morty never made it to the dance.”

“She was busy.” Rick didn’t mean to growl but he hadn’t had anything to drink in nearly eight hours and that was entirely too long considering he’d been conscious for most of it.

Summer cocked her hip and glared up at him, the height difference exaggerated by the stairs. “She was really looking forward to it.”

“It’s a good thing she didn’t go then, since it’d be a disappointment.”

Summer rolled her eyes but her face was a little softer when she said, “Look Grandpa, Morty loves you and she loves going on adventures with you but you have to let her have boundaries.”

He scoffed. Like hell he did. “What, are you my therapist now? How much do I o-oouh-we you for that little piece of pseudo-psycho-babble.”

“You joke but you really should see someone,” Summer muttered, shaking her head as she shoved past Rick. “This whole family needs therapy,” she grumbled to herself while turning the corner and Rick listened to her feet pad into her room and her door lock snick closed before he jogged down the stairs.

He upended Morty’s book bag from where it hung in the foyer, red-marked papers spilling out in a satisfyingly obtrusive pile. Then he spent five minutes tapping at Jerry’s iPad. His passcode was his birthday (unsurprising) and he didn’t have to do anything complicated to rifle through Jerry’s search history. The guy didn’t even use an incognito tab when he looked at porn. He had a decent picture of Jerry’s interests after a scant five minutes – something he didn’t really want to know especially in context with his daughter – and it was hard to keep the maniacal grin off his face when he realized exactly how easy getting rid of Jerry was going to be.

With that taken care of, Rick turned his thoughts to other matters. He’d been toying with the idea of a memory-erasing device in the back of his mind for long enough that when he put his mind to the task (first thing after he’d thrown on a clean set of clothes and incinerated Morty’s filthy dress) it took him less than two hours to gather the materials and whip them into something workable. He’d been fairly resistant to the idea – it was much easier and cleaner to kill someone rather than wipe their memory – but he supposed the advantage was getting to keep the people he at least sort-of liked should anything unmentionable slip past Morty’s lips, a valuable contingency plan given he (unfortunately) couldn’t control everything. He hadn’t tested it yet – there was no way he’d try out something like that on himself even though he was confident it would work as he expected – but one of the benefits of living with his family was a home full of potential guinea pigs.

The nanobots he didn’t have to test; he already had a version of them running through his own body. He only had to modify a new set of them slightly and voilà, he had a tracking device so small and complicated even a Rick wouldn’t be able to identify it in Morty’s body without knowing what to look for.

By the time he stumbled back into the house (he’d been drinking as he invented, two of his favorite things to combine) Beth was puttering around the kitchen. “Ah-ah-ah, I got breakfast this m-oouh-ning, sweetie,” he said, shooing her away from the cabinet where she’d been blearily blinking at the cereal selection.

“You do?” Beth said somewhat incredulously, altering her tone at Rick’s affronted look. “I mean, what’s the occasion?”
“I promised Morty French toast,” he grumbled from inside the fridge.

“Uh-oh, what’d you do?” she asked and his eyes cut up to her but she was smiling, teasingly crossing her arms.

“Kid deserves a tre-eeeeeau-at every once in a while,” he shrugged, cracking an egg into a bowl. When he caught Beth’s eyebrow raising out of the corner of his eye he turned to her with aplomb. “Aaaaand she might have missed the dance last night.”

“Oh, was she looking forward to that?” Beth wondered, sounding surprised. Morty had been going on about it all week, ever since Jessica had helped her pick out her dress last weekend and he’d cut the strictly-friend date short by dropping in and dragging her through a portal.

“Appa-aaaauh-rently,” he responded, slicing a pad of butter onto a hot pan.

“Well, she’s young. She’ll forgive you,” Beth winked, offering him a mug of coffee, sipping from her own while she leaned against the counter next to the stove, her company amiable.

He tried to sound light when he added, “And she’s been acting a little weird lately.”

It was only with half-interest that Beth queried, “Weird how?”

“Jumpy.” Rick chuckled at the flat look Beth shot him. “Jumpier that normal. N-ooouh-ot that it matters to me it’s just…“ he shrugged, “…odd.”

Rick’s ears perked at the sound of very tentative footsteps softly padding down the stairs. Beth’s smile tipped him off to Morty’s presence in the doorway. “Your grandpa’s making you breakfast, sweetie,” Beth said with only a hint of envy in her voice. “Isn’t that nice?”

“You’re really making me breakfast?” Morty repeated back, voice small, and when he turned, he was disappointed to see that she couldn’t quite meet his eyes. She had showered and dressed in her usual yellow t-shirt and jeans, the sight comforting even if he had liked the way she looked in a dress. Her eyes darted up to his before quickly shooting back down to the floor.

“What’s it look like I’m doing?” Rick asked sarcastically, gesturing to the frying pan and the stack of already cooked French toast. He didn’t expect Morty to scoot forward and genuinely inspect the contents of the pan and he chuckled a little, resting his hand on her head like he had a million times before. He really didn’t expect – or like – when she flinched away from his touch and darted to the silverware drawer like his hand had burned her.

Rick pointedly lifted half his eyebrow at Beth in a little ‘I told you so’ glance before copying her baffled frown. Beth shrugged in response and took another sip of her coffee.

“I’ll – I’ll set the table,” Morty muttered, gathering a handful of forks and plates and bee-lining it out of the kitchen.

“Hey there, kiddo,” Jerry’s voice sounded from where Morty disappeared and both Rick and Beth turned to catch the pointed way Morty avoided her dad’s friendly shoulder pat like he had the plague. Rick made a point of furrowing his brow and turning back to the French toast with a calculatingly thoughtful look – all where Beth could see his expression. After a moment, her face mirrored his.

Jerry scoffed when he caught sight of Rick at the stove. “Finally making yourself useful around here?” Beth sighed and Rick could practically hear the ‘like you’re any different’ that radiated from the disdainful glare she shot Jerry as she sauntered out of the room.
Rick frowned, sliding another piece of French toast onto the growing stack. “Oh, and when was the last time you cooked a meal instead of leaving it up to my daughter?”

Jerry bristled. “I won’t be spoken to like that in my house.”

Rick clicked off the stove and wandered over to the fridge, replacing the butter and pulling out a carton of orange juice. “Ye-eeeou-ah?” he needled, “and who’s paying the mortgage? It’s not like you’ve got a job.”

“Neither do you,” Jerry half-shouted, stomping his foot like an angry toddler.

“Yeah but I pay rent.” Rick accentuated his point by slamming a glass down on the counter just a little too hard. Man, Jerries had a knack for riling him up and this one really took the fucking cake. It had only taken the one accidental glimpse of Beth hunched over the kitchen table alone in the middle of the night, clearly struggling to balance the family’s finances with only her income to convince Rick that he could afford to pitch in around the house. He made that sort of small change selling weed to local teenagers – not that Beth knew that’s where he was getting the money. She didn’t ask. She knew better than to ask. It was really the crux of their relationship.

“Funny,” Jerry smugly crossed his arms and Rick turned his back to him, making quick work of pulling a pill out of his breast pocket and crushing half of it into the glass. “I don’t remember seeing a single red cent from you.”

“Tha-aaaaouh-t’s cause I give it to Beth.” Rick poured the orange juice over the fine white powder and gave the cup a swirl before turning back to Jerry’s outraged face.

Jerry’s mouth opened but it took him a moment before he called out, “Beth?!” hurt lacing his tone.

“You’d just waste it, Jerry,” Beth shouted back from the table, clearly distracted and disinterested. “He pays electricity too.” Rick smirked and toasted Jerry with the glass of orange juice derisively.

Jerry sputtered. “Well this is still my house. And – and that’s my orange juice.”

“A-aauh-ctually it’s Morty’s orange juice,” Rick corrected, swirling the glass again.

“And Morty’s my daughter - so I’ll be the one bringing her orange juice,” Jerry proclaimed, snatching the cup out of Rick’s hand and storming away.

“Be my fucking guest, Jerry,” Rick laughed, a cruel smirk curling the corners of his lips. If Jerry made this any easier, it might be boring.

He followed Jerry out to the table, the plate of French toast balanced on one hand and his coffee mug in the other. Rick didn’t miss the subtle shift Morty made in her chair away from him when he sat down, and he frowned hard at her until Beth glanced up and he pointedly morphed the expression into concern, just in time to catch Morty drink deeply from her glass of roofied orange juice. Rick checked his watch. While he doused his plate in syrup, Summer traipsed down the stairs, attention glued to her phone, perfectly in time to put Stage One into motion.

“Hey girls, I was thinking – that movie came out this weekend and I know Summer mentioned wanting to see it.” Morty finally stopped poking disinterestedly at her French toast and cut her attention to him so fast he practically heard her neck crack. Jeezus she was a jealous little thing. The thought whispered to the monster inside of Rick and he suppressed a grin.

Summer perked up. “What, you mean the new Rapid and Raging movie?”
Oh crap, was that what he was going to have to sit through? “Ye-eeuuuuuh-ah sure, that one. What do you say we go check it out? My treat?”

“It’s been a while since I’ve been to a movie,” Jerry intoned and Rick focused his eyes to the left of Jerry’s shoulder to keep himself from throwing his coffee mug at the idiot’s head.

“I di-eee-eeg-dn’t invite you, Jerry.”

“You promised you’d mow the lawn today, Jerry,” Beth reminded him, not even remotely kindly. “You’ve been putting it off all week.”

“Rick could **invent** something to mow the lawn automatically! He could press that button and get one of those blue guys to come do it for me,” Jerry whined.

“Cause that went so well last time,” Beth muttered to herself and Rick leaned back, slinging an arm over the back of Morty’s chair and trying not to let the way she tensed up against his forearm feed the simmering pool of anger boiling in his gut.

“I’m not going to do your fucking chores for you, Je-eeurrry,” Rick said flatly, leveling the man with a glare. “I just wanted to treat my girls to a nice Sunday.”

Summer, who had pointedly turned her attention back to her phone at the first sign of a fight, chimed up, “There’s one in thirty minutes, think we can make it?”

Morty’s shoulders relaxed, just a touch, and sank slightly against his arm with agonizing slowness. “I – I’d like to go,” she stammered, her wide eyes glancing at Rick who made sure to smile reassuringly back.

“Morty, you need to stay home and do your schoolwork,” Beth commanded from the head of the table and Rick watched Morty flinch. “I found your tests in the foyer and you are **not** getting the kinds of grades I expected.” Well yeah. She wasn’t the one getting the calls from the school about Morty’s bad grades and worse attendance. Those all went to a special line Rick had installed that led directly to his Jerry-bot, the robot gifted with more artificial intelligence than the actual man could reasonably claim.

“Wha – but **Mom** –” Morty pleaded, rubbing distractedly at her eyes and sinking a little further back into her seat.

“No buts. Now, if you want to keep adventuring with your grandpa, you’ve got to stay home and finish your homework.”

“Yeah Morty, stay home with me!” Jerry cheered and Rick glared daggers across the table. “You can help me mow the lawn or we can just hang out.” Morty sank a little deeper against Rick’s arm.

“She needs to **study**, Jerry,” Beth’s voice was sharp. “And you need to do your own chores. **God, it’s like I have three children.**”

“But we’re still going, right?” Summer asked Rick, completely ignoring the way her sister pouted and slumped over, resting her chin on her fist.

Rick glanced to his daughter. “Beth, you still down?” As if she would miss an opportunity to get a brief reprieve from Jerry on the weekend.

“Sounds great, Dad,” she answered, finishing the dregs of her coffee and standing up to gather plates.
I got this, you go get ready,” Rick stopped her with a hand on her arm, taking the pile of flatware and watching as Beth and Summer disappeared up the stairs. Morty was hanging her head, heavy eyes boring into him pleadingly but still rimmed with anxiety. He used Jerry’s pointed glare as an excuse to leave the room, dumping the dishes in the sink and listening to the conversation at the table.

“Here’s the plan, Morty,” he heard Jerry corner the girl before she could escape. “You help me mow the lawn and I’ll help you do your homework.”

“Dad, I – you heard Mom, I’ve gotta do my – my school stuff. And I’m –” she broke off to yawn, “-I might go back to sleep for a bit, I’m – I just got really tired...”

“You’re always tired. It’s from staying out all night with Rick. You were with him last night, weren’t you?” Jerry’s tone was sharp and accusatory.

Rick could feel the way tension seized Morty up like a vice even through the wood and plaster of the wall. “I – I,” she stuttered.

“What were you doing, anyways, I never even heard you come in,” Jerry asked but Morty didn’t make a sound, clearly unable to form a solid thought. “Beth doesn’t –” he broke off and started over, “Your mother and I don’t ask too many questions but if your time with Rick starts to interfere with your schoolwork or your chores, we’re going to have to put our foot down. What can you possibly be doing with him all night, anyways?”

The silence was deafening and Rick waited, hand on his new memory wiper and weight balanced on the balls of his feet, to hear Morty’s answer. Then he heard a sniffle.

“Morty, are you-” Jerry stumbled to a halt. “Morty, come on, I didn’t mean to make you cry. It’s okay, I’m not mad at you Morty, I know it’s Rick who’s the problem.”

“Dad there’s -” Morty half pleaded and Rick’s grip tightened on the trigger of his device. She better fucking not...

“Now then,” Jerry interrupted in his trying-to-be-firm voice and for the first time Rick was almost grateful for his lack of tact. “I won’t have any of these crocodile tears,” the chair squealed against the floor as he pushed away from the table. “You always help Rick with his space adventure stuff, can’t you take a little time to help out your old man with the lawn? I’ll even show you something special.” Morty sniffled again while Jerry’s footsteps paced out of the room. “I’ll meet you outside. I’m not taking no for an answer, missy!”

Rick forcefully unwrapped his fingers from the white knuckled grip on the memory gun. He couldn’t believe it. He thought Morty was smarter than that – that she had enough sense in her idiot head to keep her trap shut. Apparently not. Well, he’d have to do something about that.

Once Rick was sure Jerry had disappeared out the front door, he stalked back into the room and took the effort to control his breathing. A younger version of himself would have been losing his mind, would be breaking the plate of mostly uneaten French toast sitting in front of her just to watch her flinch. But that wasn’t who he was anymore and even through the haze of rage he knew he didn’t want to scare her; didn’t want to hurt her.

His breath left him in a sigh and he tried not to glow as Morty swiped at her tears, her movements slow like she was moving underwater, her half-lidded eyes determinedly studying the grain in the table. She stiffened when Rick laid a hand heavily on her shoulder. He dragged her bodily up to her feet, her legs struggling briefly to support her weight, before she mindlessly followed his pulling to...
the bottom of the stairs.

At the first step she finally found the courage to cast wary eyes up to him. “R-Rick?” she muttered, voice a little wobbly like she might start crying again. He heard Summer’s door swing open and noticed her pause at the top of the landing, watching the exchange curiously. Morty, too emotional and exhausted didn’t notice her presence. “Can we – talk?” Morty sounded small and scared and he made a point to look confused.

“Can’t it wait Morty,” he responded, pulling out his flask and taking a long pull. “I’ve got a mo-oouugh-vie to catch.”

Her lower lip wobbled. “You aren’t – you’re not really going to leave me here, right?” she asked and Rick wondered if she was that desperate to avoid homework and her father or if it was the possibility that Summer or Beth would trump her place as his favored partner. He didn’t want to leave her there, not with that little display with Jerry at the table, but a glance at his watch told him she was minutes away from completely konking out and that would spare him the need to use his new memory wiper, at least for now. He lifted an eyebrow. Loud cursing drifted through the open door, Jerry no doubt taking his own ineptitude out on the lawnmower. “Don’t leave me with him,” she said pointedly, clearly trying to make her request sound less clingy.

“Sorry, buddy.” She shivered at the endearment, or maybe at the hand he trailed along her upper arm. “Gotta listen to your mom with this one.”

She drooped onto the banister and looked up at him through her lashes with huge watery eyes. “Please,” she almost whispered and Rick frowned and tilted his head so Summer would see it, ruffling Morty’s hair.

“Hey, I’ll be back in a couple of hours,” he answered, trying to make his rough voice soft. “We can hang out then, okay? Work on some stuff in the garage. You’re practically falling asleep on your feet anyways.”

She swayed and he could tell by the way her blinks grew in length that she wasn’t long for the conscious world. She shot him one anxious look over her shoulder midway up the stairs and disappeared into the hall, brushing past Summer unseeingly.

“What was that about?” Summer asked while she sauntered down the stairs, that gleam in her eyes exactly what Rick had been hoping for.

“Kid didn’t want to stay home with your dad,” Rick summarized in case Summer hadn’t hit the right conclusion. Another round of loud cursing filtered in from outside. “Can’t say I blame her.”

Beth drove them to the theater and Rick uncurled a fifty from his roll of bills to pay for the tickets and a tub of popcorn to share. Once the lights dimmed and the casual conversation he’d been kicking around with Beth died down, he allowed his attention to drift back to the house. With a few taps at his watch, his cybernetic eye gave him seamlessly access to the security cameras he’d installed around the house. To be more accurate, they’d probably be called spy cameras since their main function was to provide Rick with a way to check in with his family when he was out. His computer was set to alert him if something dangerous, interesting, or funny was playing out - one of his favorite gems being the time Jerry tripped and fell down the stairs, his pants somehow sliding down to his knees in the process.

Rick was less than thrilled to find Jerry in the garage. Rick chewed hard at the straw of his spiked soda and tried to temper the bubble of rage that gurgled up in his gut. In his determination to avoid the one chore he’d been tasked with, Jerry seemed to have broken the lawnmower, probably in some
delusional attempt to ‘fix’ the changes Rick had made to it – he’d fully automated it during the brief
time Morty had been tasked with the chore since he didn’t want to waste either of their time with
lawn care but once Jerry started claiming the easier chore as his own, Rick reversed the change,
purely to watch Jerry suffer. Engine parts were scattered across Rick’s worktable, his own project
shoved to the back of the desk pell-mell. Rick swallowed his rage, centering himself in the
knowledge that all the minor slights he’d endured were about to come to an end. Jerry had a date
with destiny and Rick was determined to see him to it.

Morty was out hard, stretched across her covers facedown like she’d toppled over and fallen asleep
where she’d landed. She had managed to take off her shoes and socks but her shirt was halfway up
her back like she’d been in the middle of pulling it over her head before collapsing on the bed.
Looking at her graceless sleeping posture was more interesting than the train wreck of a movie at
least forty percent of the time so he kept the video feed up, his attention divided between the massive
explosive car chases on screen and the steady rise and fall of Morty’s back.

Jerry tried to rouse her four separate times. Each occasion he’d enter the room without knocking and
prod at Morty until he’d turned her mostly over. As the movie wrapped up, Rick watched as Jerry sat
down on her bed and ranted for a full twenty minutes, even though she was completely dead to the
world. He made a point to mute the audio feed once Jerry’s complaining about Rick turned to
rambling about some phone line friend and even Rick felt the first stirrings of disgusted pity.

When Jerry distractedly dragged the covers out from under Morty and draped them over her, Rick
burned with irrational anger but schooled his features as he and the girls strolled back into the
sunshine and discussed the movie on the short drive home. Summer enjoyed it and Beth enjoyed the
break from her husband and then she laughed like being married to someone she borderline-hated
wasn’t painful to watch for everyone involved. She even ‘tsked’ when she saw the grass was just as
long as it had been when they left and Rick marveled yet again over how damaged this version of his
daughter must be that she stuck it out with Jerry despite his numerous flaws. He’d seen her skirt
around at least three extremely valid reasons to divorce his pathetic ass in a way that generally
indicated some sort of love or affection but she pretty clearly harbored no such feelings.

“Jerry!” she called the minute they’d opened the front door and Rick took a long sip from his flask.
Beth was halfway up the stairs when Jerry emerged from Morty’s bedroom; red-cheeked and
nervous looking.

Fucking perfect timing.

“Oh you’re back,” Jerry smiled, his expression strained and awkward.

“I told you to leave Morty alone. And you didn’t even mow the lawn.” There was the tone he
recognized so well from his own Beth: disappointment and derision. It was so much better hearing it
directed at someone else, especially when that someone was Jerry and his complexion paled at the
timbre.

“Rick broke the lawnmower,” Jerry whined and Rick rolled his eyes, turning away from the
bickering duo and strolling into the living room, plopping himself down on the couch.

“I really doubt that,” Beth deadpanned. “You weren’t supposed to interrupt Morty’s studying.”

“She didn’t do any studying, she’s been asleep. I just tucked her in,” Jerry responded petulantly.

Judging by Beth’s silence, she wasn’t impressed. “Go take care of the lawn, Jerry,” she ordered, her
footsteps disappearing up the stairs. Jerry slinked into the living room like a timid cat and settled into
the armchair, attention turned to the interdimensional show Rick had put on to look distracted.
It took less than a minute for Beth to call down the stairs, “Dad? Would you come up here?” Right on track.

Rick glared at Jerry before he ambled up the stairs, flask in hand.

He found Beth in Morty’s room, hovering over the sleeping girl. “She’s not waking up,” Beth confessed to him, shaking the girl’s shoulder as proof. Morty didn’t stir, didn’t even mumble, she only resettled into the position Beth’s had pushed her into.

“She’s a heavy sleeper,” he shrugged, taking a sip but frowning slightly at the comatose girl. “Lots of mornings she won’t wake up,” he continued, and it was true. He probably should cut back on how often he drugged her into oblivion but it was easier to put her out and slip away than answer any sticky questions about where he was going or why he couldn’t bring her with. And it helped calm her down if she was amped up from a job gone wrong. And tucking her warm dead weight into the bed was homey in a way he swore he fucking hated except he did it a little too often to believe his own lie.

“Yeah but,” Beth dithered, “I mean I’m not trying to sound paranoid but this is weird, right?” Beth flipped down the covers. When Jerry had tucked her in, the blanket had tugged her shirt up even higher, revealing the curved expanse of her skinny ribs, clear finger shaped bruises marring her skin where Rick had gotten a little too rough with her the night before, and one small breast. Beth quickly yanked her shirt down before frowning up at Rick. He returned the expression, pointedly capping his flask.

“I’ll check her out,” he agreed, tugging Morty’s shirt down to cover her stomach before riffling in his pocket. He lifted her limp arm and pressed a small glass disk the size of a thimble to the veins in her elbow. A digital projection of the chemical compounds found in her bloodstream projected holographically in the space above the disk.

“What’s it say?” Beth asked, interest piqued by the alien tech.

Rick watched as the letters spelled out exactly what he knew they would. 

Rohypnol.

The blue flashing letters lit up Beth’s horrified face. “Yu-uuuuuh-p, she’s been drugged.”

“Drugged?!” Beth shouted in alarm before pointedly lowering her voice and glancing at the open door. “Drugged?” She repeated to him in a heated whisper.

“Roofied from the look of it,” he replied, eyes scanning through her bloodwork.

“By who?!” Beth demanded and Rick pocketed the little device and hardened his features into a glare. “Was it on some adventure with you? Who were you two with last night?”

Rick cast a resentful, almost pitying look her way. “She was wi-aaaaaah awake at breakfast, sweetie.”

“But the only people she’s seen since then were us,” Beth acknowledged and Rick waited patiently, eyebrow a flat line as he let Beth come to the conclusion herself. The thought had to come from her own deductions or she’d never believe it. He stared at her, willing her to accept the picture Rick had painted. He saw it when it happened, the way her eyes rolled up to meet his and her face went lax. “He wouldn’t.” she stated, wilting slightly when he cocked half his unibrow at her. “He’s not – he’s got a lot of flaws but…”

“Come on, he’s never asked you to do anything weird in bed?” Rick queried. He already knew the answer.
“He – maybe a few times… But that’s different.” The other half of his unibrow lifted and Beth averted her eyes. “We can’t prove anything.”

Rick sighed. His Beth would already be packing Jerry’s clothes and he felt some strange rush of emptiness when he thought of her hard eyes, wicked quick intuition, and the cold freeze that pushed him out of her life. He didn’t exactly miss her, he really did prefer the Beth in dimension U-694, but this one was different – meeker – and her reluctance to take action stirred a pot of memories he didn’t often sample from.

But he hadn’t expected this to push Beth over the edge, he knew her strengths and her weaknesses and even though he was open to being pleasantly surprised, he wasn’t about to start holding his breath. This was only the first step, a little amuse-bouche for the main course of Jerry’s eradication. Rick could be patient, if he had to be.

“I’ll look into it,” he promised, pulling out a dropper and squirting a single pearl of purple fluid into Morty’s ear. “But for the record, dragging your feet is only going to endanger Morty.”

“I –” Beth swallowed and her face hardened. “We’ll keep an eye on her. Somewhere in that garage is something you can use to protect her, right?”

“I’ve got a few tricks up my sleeve, o-ouuuug-bviously,” Rick turned Morty’s head over and squeezed another purple drop of liquid into her other ear.

“Good. Then use them. Keep her safe.” As if he needed to be asked. He also wasn’t above finding humor in the irony of her request but it wasn’t like Rick had needed her permission. Morty was his to protect and his to destroy. No question about it.

Even still, best to lay the guilt on Beth, a little shove in the right direction. “Yeah, but I can’t protect h-eeuer-er from what’s already happened,” he said pointedly, demanding her eye contact with the sternness of his voice. Morty groaned and shifted, her arm fighting his grip on her wrist to rub at her eyes.

“Rick? Mom?” Morty muttered, blinking her eyes open and peering at them curiously. “Why’re you in my room? What time is it?”

“Don’t worry about it,” Rick demanded, grabbing her by the arm and tugging her to her feet. “I need your help in the garage, Morty.” He made sure to shoot Beth one last penetrating glare before he dragged Morty out of the room but his daughter’s gaze was unseeing, her brow furrowed; mind clearly running through every interaction she’d seen between Morty and Jerry in recent history.

Perfect.
Morty was still groggy when Rick had finally dragged her all the way down to the garage and shoved her in the direction of his desk. With a click, the garage door open to the driveway began swinging down and Morty turned, eyes half-mast but alarmed when she caught the pointed way Rick turned the lock in the knob leading to the house. He hit a switch on a box mounted against the doorframe and a pulse of red energy swept the walls, the low hum of a sound barrier drowning out the quiet thump of the garage door hitting pavement. The air was still and heavy with the weight of unnatural silence.

Rick saw the moment Morty’s survival instincts kicked in, the moment something fired off in her brain and she realized she was in trouble. On missions and adventures, that feeling manifested itself as fight or flight, but now, trapped alone with him in the garage, he watched her freeze up like prey staring into the gaping maw of a natural predator.

“Rick, what’s—” she trailed off when he stalked closer to her, her face twisting in anxiety as she cringed away. Rick wasn’t surprised; he had put off the morning’s anger long enough that it had festered into something ugly, something familiar and terrible and unstoppable; and he was sure he looked the part.

He paced to his shelf of abandoned inventions and fished around in a box, Morty’s wide eyes tracking the movement. It didn’t take him long to find what he was looking for: three metal U brackets, two fairly small and one larger, each with a drill hole on the flat end on either side of the curve. They clanked together when Rick tossed them onto the workbench before he bent over to dig the electric screwdriver out of a drawer. He tested it, the whir of the drill screaming through the quiet and making Morty flinch. She eyed the straps of metal warily and Rick glowered at her until she dropped her eyes to her rapidly twisting fingers. He tucked a handful of screws between his lips and paced over to the startled girl.

He caught up her shoulders between his hands and maneuvered her to the short end of his worktable, pressing the front of her hips against the ledge. “Rick?” she asked, voice high and tight as he dropped his hands to her waist and hefted her up to her toes, her stomach better slotting against the countertop as he leaned his weight against her back and she bent with him. Her forearms automatically braced herself against the table and he rearranged them until they were spread a little more than shoulder width apart. “R-Rick?” she tried again and Rick knew she felt the shiver that traveled through him by the stilted little gasp she made. “What’s – what are you doing?”

He stayed silent while he snatched up one of the smaller U brackets, slating the curved bend of it over Morty’s right wrist, the straight edges lining up with the flat wooden surface of the table. Before she could properly realize what was happening, he stabbed a screw through the small hole on the flat edge flush with the counter, the droning electric buzzzzz thud-thud-thud of the cordless drill sinking the screw into the wood like it was butter.

“RICK?!” Morty gasped, her free hand clawing at the metal already hopelessly binding her wrist to the table. “What are you doing?!” She reared against him but her weight was too slight to budge him and she had the sense to move her hand when he lined the second screw up to the other side of the bracket and drilled it through to the wood.

Her right arm was pinned and her already hot body blazed with the heat of her stress. “Rick, please,
what are you – come on, what’s – tell me what’s going on…” she begged. Rick didn’t say a word, only reached for the other small U bracket and savored the small whimper that escaped her lips when he wrapped his longer fingers around her other wrist.

It was a little harder to pin that one down now that she could guess at his designs. Still, she had one less hand to fight him off with, the trapped one scratching at the wood uselessly, tugging against the metal that she had no chance of escaping. It fit too snugly against her wrist, her hand too wide to fit through the arch. He wrestled her other wrist to the tabletop and braced his hand against the bracket as two more screws secured metal to wood.

Morty’s whole upper body heaved with her struggles, her skin already growing pink as it chafed against the dark steel bands. These brackets had held aliens with ten-times her strength; her feeble resistance was hopeless, but he wasn’t about to tell her that. The struggle was part of the lesson.

“Please,” she begged and Rick could tell from her voice that she was crying. Her hips were flush with his and he took a moment to lean down and nose at her neck, the flowery smell of her hair and the rabid tang of her fear electrifying his nerves. “Rick, please, tell me what’s happening.” When his only response was to push firmly but gradually between her shoulder blades, pressing pressing pressing until her upper body was flat against the worktable, her cheek pressed against the wood, her back started heaving with sobs.

“Shhh,” he half soothed her, collecting her long hair and brushing it up and away from her shoulders, planting his hand heavily on her head and holding it still as he slotted the last, larger U bracket over the back of her neck, the line of it even with the two pinning her hands. She cringed at the scream of the drill so close to her ears.

He leaned back to admire his handiwork, his weight no longer required to keep her in place.

Morty squirmed against the metal, her feet arching up onto her bare toes to accommodate the height of the countertop, her elbows twitched occasionally as she yanked against her binds. “Rick,” she whined, her voice tear-wracked and broken. She tried to jerk the table but it was too heavy and it barely wobbled. He smoothed his hands along the stretch of her back, her t-shirt already wet with sweat. Bent over like that, a small stretch of bare skin spanned the distance between the back of her shirt and the waistband of her jeans. He ran his nails along her exposed flesh, relishing her shiver.

Rick dipped his fingers into the hem of her pants and Morty started begging again. “Rick – Rick, what are you doing? Come on you never shut up! Just tell me Rick – oh jeez,” she trailed off when his hands slid around her waist until he’d found the button and zipper, undoing them both and tugging the material down her legs, dragging her panties with them.

He had to crouch down to finish the task, her jeans clinging to her thighs and calves, Morty’s frantic wiggling doing nothing to aid him in undressing her. But when he glanced up, the view his position offered him left him winded.

When she’d lifted up her skirt to bare herself to him the night before, she’d been standing; the only real view that of her mons and the slight hint of lips hidden beneath hair. In this position, Rick was greeted with the up-close spectacle of her bare ass and pink slit, the folds clearly visible even as she clenched her legs and squirmed, one of her feet shooting up in an attempt to kick him before he deftly caught it. He stared at the appendage a moment before rustling around in a drawer, returning to loop a zip tie around her ankle and the table leg. He repeated the procedure to the other much more violently kicking appendage as Morty groaned above him, tugging the plastic tight until her legs were spread apart and immovable.

He palmed at her slit absently, pulling apart her folds to examine the minute details of her flesh and
she writhed below him, her whimper morphing into a whine.

“Riiick?!” she squealed, thighs tensing as he trailed his hand along the smooth skin and over the curve of her ass. When his hand left her skin she begged, “Grandpa, please.”

He wasn’t sure if she was begging him to stop or begging him for more and a glance at her tear stained face as he stalked past her to the corkboard of tools made him think she wasn’t so sure either. Her eyes rolled up to follow him, the movement of her head severely limited, and he watched her eyelashes flutter when he snatched up scissors and shot her a cruel glare.

“Oh jeez, oh fuck,” she whimpered when he paced back to her side, sliding the cool edge of the scissors along her spine. The loud ripping tear of her shirt as he dragged the open blades along the fabric nearly drowned out her harsh panting but not quite. He slit the fabric in one long line from bottom hem to neck line, then made two quick snips from the tear down each sleeve until he could peel the shirt out from under her torso, leaving her nude and bent over for his perusal.

He generally thought Morty wasn’t much to look at but like this she was a sight. She was slender – like him – and he could trace the lines of her bones below the flushed skin. Surrounded by all the metal and tools and contraptions he’d filled the garage with, she looked soft and exposed, like a specimen ready to be dissected. He watched her ribcage expand and contract with every gasping breath, the unsteady rise and fall mesmerizing. The fragile line of her shoulder was marked with the bruise he’d left behind last night with his teeth. It was mottled and purple, huge looking against the delicate line of her scapula. He prodded at it and she let out a wordless little cry.

He dragged the stool she usually occupied into her line of sight and seated himself, crossing his arms and watching her shoulders heave as she started to hyperventilate. Still he said nothing.

“Rick – please – what’s – I don’t – what did I do?!” she panted, legs straining against the zip ties as she clenched her calves, her toes scrabbling at the ground. He rested his elbow on the countertop, inches from her clenched, trembling fist, letting his chin rest in the palm of his hand as he stared down at her tear-wrecked face. Her lower lip was trembling, her chin wobbling as she sniffled and moaned. “Just tell me, Rick, I swear I’ll never – I won’t do it again, whatever I did, just please, talk to me please…I’m scared…”

He smoothed her hair away from where it stuck to her wet cheek, brushing the lengthy strands in soothing strokes until it gathered in one long chestnut coil across his worktable.

He finally met her eyes, the brown dilated to black as she gasped out hot breaths. “I’m sorry,” she whispered and for a moment Rick was sure he was going to dive headlong into the endless expanse of her pupils. “I’m sorry Rick, I’m so sorry.”

He had found that dark place inside of himself that he’d sworn he’d shut down, locked up, and thrown away forever. But it had been there all this time, festering, like a body hidden in the basement – you could board up the door and pretend it wasn’t there but there would always be the smell.

“What are you sorry for Morty?” he asked, his voice coarse. He pulled his flask out of his pocket and took a long sip to help him swallow down the knot in his throat.

Morty’s face shriveled up into a sob. “I don’t know, Rick - I’m so sorry, please just tell me what I did…”

Rick ‘tsk’ed and a fresh wave of tears washed down Morty’s cheeks. He ran his hand along the curve of her spine and back up again. He took a deep breath and pinched the skin of her hip until she keened. “You were going to tell Jerry,” he finally said and his voice was gravel.
She sucked in a gasp and did her best to shake her head. “No – no, Rick…”

“I heard you after breakfast,” he chided and he watched her flushed face pale. “I didn’t think I had to warn you this was our secret but then you tried to spill the beans…”

“I – I didn’t!” she stammered, the skin that wasn’t flushed pink was ash white. “I didn’t tell anyone!”

“But you thought about it, Morty. You thought about telling your dad.”

She clenched her eyes closed and breathed deeply through her stuffed nose. “I’m sorry, Rick – I – I promise I won’t.”

“I know you won’t,” he soothe and she stilled under the dark look he could feel clouding his face. “You wanna know how I’m so sure?” She swallowed heavily around the metal against her throat and bore into him with big dark eyes. “Because I own you, Morty,” he stated firmly and he watched the way the words made her squirm; legs straining and hips grinding into the table. “And you’ll do what I want.”

The chair scraped when he shoved away from the table and he collected a syringe filled with green liquid. When her eyes fell upon the sight, she renewed her struggling in earnest. “Wha – what’s that, Rick?” she demanded, trying to arch away from his touch when he circled behind her, stroking her flank and enjoying the slight curve to her waist as he traced along her sides with his fingertips.

“Something to remind you of me,” he answered blandly, pushing the oversized needle into the skin at the base of her spine and plunging the green fluid into her bloodstream. She cringed and whined at the stab before he pulled the needle from her body and reseated himself, tossing the empty syringe into a pile of junk.

“I don’t –” she cut herself off with a flinch, her eyebrows furrowing as sweat beaded on her forehead. “Wha- owww…”

“They’re nanobots, Morty,” he spoke placidly above her, his hand back in her hair. Her face was going through a complicated series of thoughts, most of them painful. “They’re traveling up your spine and rooting themselves into your bones, imbedding themselves so deep they’re virtually undetectable.” She started panting again, her muscles spasming against their bonds.

“It hurts…” she breathed out on a whisper and Rick shushed her again, wiping at the sweat beading at her brow.

“I know, Morty. I’ve got them in my spine too.” Her eyes jerked up to his and the tiny, unfathomable glimmer of trust just barely sparking at the edge of her pupils forced a breath out through his clenched teeth like a hiss. “If you had been good, I would have put you out for this.” She started keening, long and low, seemingly unable to keep the noise to herself as her arms jerked against their restraints. “You wouldn’t have felt a thing, Morty.”

“What are they - going to do?” she gasped out, face wound up into a grimace, teeth clenched so tightly Rick could hear them grinding.

“They’ll monitor your health, make small adjustments to your chemicals when necessary. They’ll alert me if you’re poisoned or hurt or stolen.”

“Stolen?” she asked on a pant, her hands systematically clenching and unclenching, a sheen of sweat coating her bare back.

Rick sighed. He had to tell her something or else she’d be a sitting duck. “Other Rick and Morties
aren’t your friends, Morticia.” It was a testament to how rarely he used her full name that the sound of it had her snapping her eyes open despite the pain clouding her gaze.

“My – the other Morty - he seemed nice,” she exhaled, her shoulders heaving with her effort to steady her breathing.

“They might seem nice Mo-ooouh-rtty but that doesn’t mean you can trust them,” he spat down to her and she cringed, her breathing picking up speed. Rick frowned and stroked a hand down her spine.

“Can I trust you?” she asked, her eyes boring into him with surprising lucidity. She gasped a couple time to steady herself and he could tell from the way the muscles in her back had started jerkily relaxing that the worst of the nanobot melding was over.

He chewed her question over, his eyebrow dipping in a V. “Better me than some other Rick,” he settled on, stroking the fine hairs on her arm.

She huffed, her breath so hot he could feel the fevered heat of it on the hand he braced against the table. “Because you’re my Morty?” she urged, her chewed finger nails slowing their scrabbling at the wood.

“Because you’re my Morty,” he answered flatly, rewarded with the reverence that glowed like starlight in her eyes.

She jerked against the restraints again, reminded of her predicament now that the pain had dimmed. He remembered the feeling. Shock and adrenaline setting in just in time to completely miss the party. “What – why are you doing this?” Her voice trembled as she started to shiver.

“To teach you a lesson about disobeying me,” he growled and her eyes jumped down to his lips. “To keep you safe. I don’t want to hurt you but I will if you make me.” He stood, letting his hands massage the sweating skin of her back and trying to ease her shaking. “But if you’re good, Morty, I can make you feel good,” he continued, his fingers trailing to the cleft of her ass and the wet slit of her folds. He couldn’t believe what he was feeling. She was drenched, her thighs soaked with her own arousal. “You’re wet again,” he breathed, leaning to press a kiss to the curve of her shoulder blade. Her face was flushed again, either from exertion or embarrassment but Rick guessed the latter from the pointed way she studied her own fist. “You like this, don’t you Morty.” Her cheeks darkened and Rick groaned into his hand. “You’re getting off on this, you little freak.” He squeezed her ass hard and finalized the moment with a solid smack to her rump, moaning at the surprised gasp that huffed out of Morty. “Fuck, you were made for me.”

The way her gaze jumped up to his face set off an alarm in his head and he narrowed his eyes. “Did you hear something about that? From that other Morty?” Rick asked, derision staining his voice into an ugly bruise. “Did he tell you why we pair up in almost every dimension?”

Morty jerked at the soft petting of her slit, a shaky exhale making her legs quiver. “I’m –” she trailed off and he dragged his forefinger down to tease at her sopping entrance. “We’re human shields – Morties – we hide your brianwaves…”

Rick groaned at the wet slick of her, his finger sliding down to tease at her clit. “That’s right Morty. You’re my fucking suit of armor.” He resisted the overwhelming temptation to drop his pants and plunge into her. He did give into the urge to palm himself through his slacks, Morty watching the motion of his hand with burning black eyes. “You’re mine Morty. You exist because of me and for me.” He accentuated his point by dipping a finger into her knuckle deep. She keened, back arching off the table as much as her binds allowed. “You couldn’t get away from me if you tried. But you wouldn’t want to do that anyways, would you? You going to keep your mouth shut about this, isn’t
She cried out and scrunched her face up when Rick removed his finger and dragged the stool behind her parted legs. He sat down lightly, spreading her ass cheeks apart to get a better view of her cunt. It was glistening with her arousal and burning hot, the folds pink and swollen and perfect. He leaned in and licked a stripe up her slit, Morty jerking below his touch.

“You won’t tell anyone, Moooorty,” he taunted, pressing a kiss to her fluttering entrance, “because you love this.” He dipped his tongue into the hot clench of her, groaning at the flavor. She tasted young and fleshy and sweet – every part of her was sweet. She cried out at the stimulation and he was glad he’d turned on the sound shield. He was desperate for those noises and while one hand rubbed at her searing clit, his other made quick work of unzipping his pants and stroking his aching dick.

He sucked noisily at her before pulling back, his fingers skimming the wet skin and sinking two fingers into her, the view so enticing he felt the hot surge of his balls pressing up against his body and he slowed the hand working himself. “You would have to tell them what a slut you are for my touch; how fucking hot you get for your old grandpa Rick.” He stopped thumbing at her clit, stopped thrusting his fingers into her heat and bit the curve of her ass when she whimpered at his pause.

“If this is our secret Morty, I can make you feel good,” he whispered into the small of her back, leaning up and over her and tracing her spine with his tongue. She writhed against the two fingers still dipped shallowly into her channel and he chuckled against her ribs. When his throbbing cock dragged against the wet valley of her pussy, she moaned, long and low and deep. Fuck what Rick wouldn’t give to exchange his fingers for his dick but it wasn’t the right time. He wanted Morty to beg for it, wanted her to be so hopelessly caught up in him that she couldn’t even imagine getting railed by anyone else.

“My needy, sensitive girl, I can make you feel so good…” He took a moment to appreciate her red face and uselessly scrabbling hands before he sat back down, blowing a long cool breath between her trembling thighs. “Is that what you want?” he asked dazedly, hypnotized by the way she struggled to grind her hips down onto his hand. He matched her pace with the grip around his shaft.

“Yes,” she whispered so softly he barely heard it. He rewarded her with half an inch more of his fingers.

“Yes, what?” he asked, nosing along her thigh, licking and biting at the tender skin.

She whimpered. “Yes, I’ll be good.”

“What else?” he prompted and she shuddered.

“This’ll be our secret.” She gasped when he slid his fingers in a little deeper, her toes straining as she rocked back, fucking herself on his hand. He licked the pucker of her asshole and she stuttered, “I – I – I’ll keep my mouth shut, I swear.”

“What else?” he demanded,

“I’ll be yours, Rick,” she panted, “I’ll do whatever you say – just – please-”

“Please what?”

“Please touch me!” She cried out in relieved anguish when he replaced his fingers with his tongue, his hand drifting lower to circle the sensitive nub of nerve endings. He felt her walls flutter against his lips, tasted the gush of her orgasm as it dripped past his tongue and he slurped it up. Her whole
body was trembling as he stood, yanking at his pulsing cock and exploding along the curve of her ass, semen dribbling along her crack and joining the slick after-remains of her own pleasure. He panted, fingers absently twisting inside of her, the other hand bracing himself over her back. He bit at the sharp curve of her scapula and pressed his forehead to her sweaty skin.

When his legs seemed likely to support his weight again, he leveraged himself up, wiping his hands on his lab coat and fishing out his phone, snapping a picture of the debauched sight of his cum dripping down the folds of Morty’s sex.

After tucking himself into his pants, he dragged the stool back into her line of sight, staring down into the glassy eyed, tear stained, blissed-out face of his Morty. He pressed another kiss to her temple and pet at her hair gently until her eyes refocused and darted up to meet his.

Her fists clenched when she grew daring enough to ask, “Are you – is this going to happen again.”

His hand spanned the breadth of her shoulders, curved along the boney ridges of her ribs before he asked, “Do you want it to, Moooorty.”

He didn’t miss the way her eyes dilated, the way her lips parted with a little huff of breath, the way the blush spread down to her neck. “I don’t know,” she answered breathily and Rick savored her uncertainty, rolled the bitter flavor of it around in his mouth like dark chocolate.

“Then I guess I get to decide,” he answered, soothing a hand over her curled fist. “‘Whatever I say’, right Morty?” She paled at his words and he ‘tsk’ed. God, she hadn’t learned anything. He frowned down at her before standing, pacing behind her to dig around in his drawers. She couldn’t see him where he stood and he could feel the anxious energy radiating from the rigid lines of her back as the odds and ends in his drawer clattered against each other.

“You can’t be like that, Morty,” he sing-songed, humming through his frustration.

“I – I said I wouldn’t tell, Rick,” she stuttered and he heard the table jerk with her struggles.

“I don’t make a habit of believing what people tell me when I’ve got my fingers buried in their cunt, Morty.” He found what he was looking for and padded back to the table, slapping Morty’s bare ass with an open hand and relishing the way she jerked out an indignant huff of surprise. “Besides, it isn’t good enough if all you do is not tell; you can’t give us away by acting all weird.”

“Then how – what do I do to not act weird?” she muttered, clearly put out, straining to turn her neck to see him but the metal bracket didn’t leave her any room to rotate her head.

“Be relaxed around me,” he instructed. “Don’t jump when I touch you,” he admonished when she did just that; jolting when he laid his hand over the clenched fist behind her head. “Hand flat,” he ordered and she whined in the back of her throat even as she complied. “Spread your fingers.”

“Rick, what-” she whimpered and would have jerked when he touched one of her nails with the small brush if he hadn’t predicted that response and kept her palm pinned flat. “What are you doing?” she demanded a little quakily and Rick rolled his eyes, continuing his work as the smell of ethyl acetate saturated the garage.

“I thought you said you’d do whatever I told you to,” he briskly reminded her and her ribs heaved with a deep breath. “If Jerry figures this out, Morty, I’ll have to make him disappear.” Man was he looking forward to that day. “Is that what you want me to do, Morty? Get rid of Jerry? You say the word and it’s done-”

“No!” she wailed, nearly clenching up her fist and ruining his handiwork.
“Hand flat,” he reminded her darkly and she immediately stilled, spreading her hand flat and splaying her fingers. “If your dad found out Morty, it would have to be me or him.” He paused in his work, watching the way her shoulders heaved in a sob. “Do you really want to make that sort of choice, Morty? Do you want me to disappear instead?”

She sobbed again and her fingers twitched but didn’t curl. “No…” she whispered softly, her pointer finger just barely caressing along his thumb. Rick’s chest tightened.

“The outside world is the enemy, Morty,” he asserted, maneuvering her thumb into a better position before blowing a long puff of air at her fingertips. “It’s just me and you, Morty, but there’s a lot of idiots who’d want to tear us apart. Keep it flat, Morty,” he warned as he circled the table, and he could tell from the open look of dismay painting her features that she would comply.

He set the little bottle of light teal nail polish down next to her loosening hand and raised half his eyebrow at her crumpled look of confusion. “What are you doing?” she repeated vaguely.

He glared down at her. “What does it look like I’m doing?” he deadpanned, starting with the nail on her pinky finger and painting it teal with two deft strokes, the color not too far from his favorite sweater.

“Okay – why are you doing that?” Morty rephrased, the last dregs of pain and arousal dripping from her face until she gawked at him with the trusting, slightly curious, vulnerable expression he was most used to seeing on her face.

“I don’t want you forgetting what we talked about,” he grunted, pressing her ring finger flat while he painted her nail. If she was older, he might have left her something a little more permanent – a small scar maybe or a piercing – but those would raise too many questions. And some strange compulsion to treat her gently stayed his hand. “You aren’t allowed to take this off without my permission. You can’t pick at it either, nail-biter.” Her eyes were laser focused on the nimble motions of his paint job.

“Where’d you even get that,” she asked and he could almost hear a hint of laughter in her voice. Something in his chest unknotted itself and he hid the relief with a scowl. “Jeezus Morty, I’m a genius, I know how to walk into a fucking drugstore. The point is, you look at your hands and you remember that you belong to me. Entirely.” She breathed in deep through her nose and met his hard gaze. “You remember that if you don’t keep your shit together, I’ll have to do it for you and I guarantee you won’t like what that entails.” Rick watched her swallow heavily. “But I can be nice.” He blew on her fingernails. “If you’re good. Can you be good?”

“Yes Rick,” she answered automatically and he didn’t quite smile but he let his face soften, capping the nail polish.

“Good girl,” he murmured, brushing a hand through her hair and kissing her temple. Her eyes were watery when he pulled back. “Now let’s get you out of this.”

He sliced the zip ties around her ankles with a box cutter, taking time to knead the red lines pressed into her soft skin. She squirmed when his hand brushed over the arch of her foot and he chuckled but resisted the urge to torture her. He wiped up his mostly dried semen with a rag he found in his pocket, gentle when he swiped over the quivering folds of her still sensitive skin and kneading her barely-existent ass in his palms. She half-heartedly kicked at his shins for groping her, but he could tell from the way she stood on her toes to press her butt into the massage that she wasn’t entirely displeased with the attention.

He grinned down at her when he test-revved the drill, laughing when she looked decidedly
concerned, but he made quick work of unscrewing the brackets, and after no time at all Morty was easing herself slowly onto her legs, rubbing at her red wrists. Rick watched her tentatively support her weight, her focus on studying the chafe marks and her newly painted nails, seemingly indifferent to her nudity or the fact that he wasn’t exactly unmoved by it.

He started to feel downright ignored when she bent over nonplussed to pick up her jeans and scowl at the tattered remains of her shirt. “Come here,” he grunted, shooting a portal at the wall and sweeping her up in his hold. Finally she paid him some attention, cheeks flushing brilliantly while she wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Did you have to ruin my shirt?” she pouted, squeaking when he stepped through the portal and dropped her onto his cot from an unnecessary height.

Laughter bubbled out of Rick before he could contain it, loud and obnoxious enough for Morty to glare up at him as she snatched up his crumpled sheet and wrapped it around her body. “That’s what you’re worried about?” he finally wrangled out through his disbelieving guffaws.

How was she so stupid? She should be terrified of him! She should be cowering or running from the room in tears. She should be calling the police and reporting him, telling anyone – telling everyone – telling the whole galaxy, ‘Hey, my grandpa’s a dirty fucking freak who’s been using me to get off, please for the love of god help me!’.

Instead she scrunched her face up like he was the idiot. “What else is there to worry about?” she asked, innocent as could fucking be. And the thought, oh fuck, you can’t let anyone else get to her, stuck Rick over the side of the head like a two-by-four.

He laughed again and brushed her hair away from her face, cupping her cheeks in both hands. “That’s right, buddy.” He gave into the urge to press another kiss to her forehead, half because he’d deduced she liked that sort of affection and half because he needed his lips on her skin. Fuck, she was just too good to be true. “Nothing to worry about at all, let old grandpa Rick take care of everything.”

He scooped her up again, blanket and all, and resettled her onto his lap. Whatever he’d been expecting, it wasn’t that the briefly tense line of her body would melt as she curled up tighter against his chest and leaned her head on his shoulder, puffing a content little sigh against his neck. He rummaged in his pockets until he found a small container of salve and began massaging it into her chaffed wrists.

“Hey Rick,” she mumbled into his collar bone, and he could feel the way her face was heating up even through two layers of fabric. “If there’s other us-es, are there other Mom and Dads too? Other Summers and – and stuff?”

Rick ran his thumb over her pulse point and admired the teal shine of her fingernails. “Yeah, Morty. There’s other Beths and Jerries and Summers. Some of them live in houses just like this and others don’t. Some are divorced. Some are dead. Some never had any kids. Some only had Summer.”

“Are there other Jessicas, too?”

Rick rolled his eyes. “Yes Morty, jeezus. But you don’t have a chance with her in any dimension so you shouldn’t think too much about it.”

“Oh jeez, really Rick?” she asked, entirely too sincerely.

“Yes really. So stop pining.”
She hummed and he could practically feel the pout she pressed into his shoulder when she timidly asked, “Do you – umm – do you do this sort of stuff with Summer or – or Mom, too?”

Rick blinked in shock, absent-mindedly watching the rough red skin on her wrists sizzle and reform into a smooth, unblemished stretch. “No, Morty, fuck-” he refuted vehemently, pulling away enough to glare down at her. She was blushing and deliberately studying her healing wrists. “Jeezus, Morty, I’m not fucking sick. I’m not a fucking predator or something.” A thought occurred to him and he couldn’t keep the sly smirk from tightening his eyes. “Or are you just being jealous?”

“Ha – ha, like you’re one to talk.” She quietly giggled on the edge of hysterically before she visibly steadied herself and glanced back up. “Then why me?” she asked, carefully light, but her eyes were two dark brown pools of longing. This close to her, Rick could see flecks of green and gold orbiting her pupils in the galaxy of her eyes, seemingly the only small trait she’d inherited from her grandmother. “I know you’ve – that you’re experienced. I’ve seen you hook up with all sorts of creatures without even exchanging a word. So why – why me?”

*Because Ricks love treasure,* the insidious voice in the back of his head whispered at him and he frowned. There was something delicious about sinking your fingers into one of the rarest things in the multi-verse; some marrow-deep gratification at taking something so singular and making it *his* unquestionably. After all, he’d cloned a dodo bird just to find out what it tasted like. Morty should consider herself lucky the hunger he felt for her was a little different.

“Sounds to me like you’re fishing for compliments,” he snarked back instead of answering, wrapping his arms around her and squishing her into his chest to avoid the sneaky, penetrating look she was shooting him. Morty sighed but settled against him, one of her hands pressing against his sternum like she was trying to feel his heart beat. “Hey, I know a place. Wanna go get some of the best ice cream in the multiverse, really ruin dinner with it?”

“Ruin mom’s cooking? She doesn’t really need any help with that.” Morty slid off his lap but turned her back and kept the blanket around her shoulders while she slid her panties up her legs. Even half shielded from it, Rick enjoyed the show.

“Hey, she’s go-o-o-o-o-out-ten better,” Rick shrugged, pulling out his flask and letting his eyes wander to the thin shoulder that slid into sight when the blanket slipped.

“Yeah since you came back, she’s gotten a little better,” Morty chuckled, and Rick scowled as she bounced a bit when she shimmied on her jeans. She lifted her ruined shirt and frowned. “Seriously, Rick, did you have to *cut* it.”

“You’ve got at least five just like it,” he said, cocking half his eyebrow.

“Well, yeah but… go – go get me another one,” she half-demanded before pussying out and blinking her big, round eyes at him. “…please.”

Rick groaned but acquiesced, jogging up the stairs and bee-lining to Morty’s dresser. Sure enough, there were *four* other identical shirts in the top drawer. He grabbed one and turned to the door, almost colliding with Jerry who’d somehow managed to sneak up on him. “Jeezus Jerry!” Rick shouted, relaxing the hand that had automatically reached for a weapon. “You’re like a fucking house cat!”

“What are you doing?” Jerry asked, his eyes darting down to the t-shirt in Rick’s hands.

“What does it look like I’m doing?” Rick growled, crossing his arms to properly glower at the idiot his daughter married. He heard footsteps on the stairs.
“Looks like you’re going through my daughter’s drawers,” Jerry snapped, reaching out to snatch the shirt out of Rick’s grip but Rick was quicker, smacking Jerry’s hand hard. “Ow…” Jerry whined, cradling his hand. “And now I *definitely* think you’re up to something.”

Rick sneered when the landing outside Morty’s door creaked. “Like you can talk. What were you doing in here earlier if Morty was asleep, Jerry?”


“And why were you lurking in her doorway, *huh* Jerry? What were you waiting for, listening at her door?”

“I don’t-” Jerry stumbled, obviously struggling to catch up with Rick’s accusations. “-She’s my daughter, and if I want to ‘lurk’ outside her door, I’m entitled to do it.” He dramatically crossed his arms to mirror Rick’s stance. “And what I choose to do with my daughter is none of your business.”

Rick watched Beth pad into view over Jerry’s shoulder, her face pale with distrust. He caught her eye before she disappeared into her bedroom and Rick smirked, internally tallying the time before Jerry’s expiration date.

Chapter End Notes

Aaaaaaaand we're back to smut. Also, the reader feedback has been *amazing*! Thanks everyone for reading and responding!
Morty was shockingly normal after Rick shoveled her fresh shirt over her head and portaled them to the dimension that used to have the best ice cream in the multiverse but now apparently served every scoop with mostly-live flies.

They’d gone to the second best ice cream shop (why even fucking bother) and she’d eaten her treat and laughed at his jokes and shot the shit the same way she always did while some deep buried coil of tension unwound itself from Rick’s stomach.

Over a dinner of slightly overcooked – but at least well-seasoned – pork chops, they’d shared conspiratorial glances while they both pointedly prodded at their chewy meat when no one was looking. Summer commented on Morty’s nails and Rick felt mollified when she blushed bright red but persuasively answered “I thought – I’m trying out something new…” Rick almost snorted out loud but he managed to hide his smirk behind his flask. It had been a while since he’d been ‘something new.’ A long while.

Summer chewed a bite of pork chop with her mouth open. “Trying to get Jessica’s attention?” she teased and Morty stammered, curling her hands into fists and shoving them under the table like she could hide the mark he’d left on her from prying eyes.

“Well, I think it looks nice,” Beth added, more of her attention on swirling her glass of wine and shooting Jerry skeptical glanced than on her daughter’s unease.

And Rick thought, this could work. Objectively he hadn’t meant to start with Morty so young; it would have been better to wait until she got out of school and taking her off planet more permanently wouldn’t be such a big fuss, but Ricks weren’t known for their patience and he’d be lying if he said the idea of masterminding their relationship under the family members’ noses wasn’t a bit of a turn-on. When he draped an arm over the back of her chair, his customary stance when he thanked Beth for the meal, Morty didn’t even flinch.

Once the meal was eaten and the dishes were cleared, Rick slouched off into the living room, determined to unwind with a few hours of steady drinking and interdimensional cable. Any other night it wouldn’t have surprised him that Morty padded after him like a lost puppy, but he hadn’t expected her to adjust to their new lifestyle so quickly. He had figured she’d take the first opportunity to disappear up into her room and have a little Morty freak out or something equally melodramatic but necessary to her coping strategy. He had resigned himself to letting her think it out alone, at least for a little bit tonight.

But when he dropped a six pack on the coffee table and got settled into his favorite spot on the couch Morty followed suit, curling herself into a ball on the middle cushion like she usually did when they hunkered down to watch TV. Beth busied herself in the kitchen (mostly drinking wine and doing the dishes) while Summer and Jerry joined them, Jerry banished to the armchair.

What wasn’t usual was the way Morty skootched closer to him after he’d cracked his first beer, wiggling over until her warm body pressed against his arm. Apparently she didn’t feel the need to heed the unspoken one-person-to-a-couch-cushion rule anymore. He caught Beth peeking at the two of them through the doorway, her expression somewhere between concern and indulgence so he made a point of looking disgruntled and vaguely worried (carefully out of Morty’s eyeline, he didn’t want to discourage her when she was being so agreeably sweet) before he lifted his arm and rested it over the back of the couch, letting Morty press herself into the curve of his body.
Summer dragged her eyes from her phone to stare in astonishment at her little sister’s audacity and he met her eyes, Rick pointedly rolling his and shrugging before drinking deeply from his bottle of beer. When he caught Jerry’s frustrated, constipated face scowling at the two of them, Rick slid his arm from the back of the couch to Morty’s shoulder’s draping his arm comfortably along the line of her back, laughing in time with her as something funny happened on TV but glowering at Jerry the whole time.

Rick wasn’t much into open displays of affection but the slight tension in her shoulders and the awkward way she laughed – a little too hard and too high and too breathy to be sincere – made Rick think maybe she needed his arm around her, his hard body slanted next to hers and propping her up. Rick didn’t picture Morty as a very good actress but the way her arm trembled against his stomach, her fist a white knuckled grip on her jeans, had him questioning her seeming normality at dinner. He crossed his leg over his knee, the motion pressing his thigh against hers a little firmer while he tugged her a bit closer to his chest. She shifted with his guidance, the muscles in her shoulders not quite unbunching but loosening under his arm.

Rick sipped at his beer and figured she was a pretty good kid. She almost made living with Jerry worth the annoyance. Then again, why put up with what you could get rid of?

And that’s how the night went. Eventually Summer slinked off to her bedroom, eyes still glued to her phone. Beth settled down in her vacant space and occasionally glanced at him and Morty surreptitiously before shaking her head and mumbling to herself. Jerry pouted and argued that Morty should come sit with him on the armchair, his frequent complaints unanimously ignored by the occupants of the room.

And Morty – Morty was the perfect little cuddler. She had the sense to keep her hands to herself so she limited their contact to the shoulder she leaned into his chest and her head when it got late enough that she drifted off every once in a while and it lolled against his collar bone. When he requested, she’d lean forward to trade out his empty beer for a full one but otherwise she was calm, seemingly content to share her searing heat. Eventually her chuckles started sounding more natural and Rick breathed out a sigh he hadn’t known he was holding in.

When Beth finally shooed her up to bed (hawk-eyes watching as Jerry dismissed himself immediately afterwards and followed Morty up the stairs), she scooted over to the middle cushion and turned to Rick. “So, what do you think?” she asked bracing her elbows on her knees and wringing her hands. “You said you’d look into it; what did you find out?”

Rick quirked half of his eyebrow. “I th-eeeeeug-think I’m going to put a lock on Morty’s door.”

“Did you talk to her at all? Did you ask her-”

“A-aaaaaaooou-sk her what?” Rick interrupted. “Whether her father’s been touching her inappropriately?” Beth studied the woodgrain on the coffee table and Rick felt a confusing surge of anger bubble up. This was how Morty’s mother was choosing to act when she thought her daughter was being abused by someone in her household. Sure, Rick was the real culprit and he should count her inaction and disinterest as a fucking blessing but the part of him that rallied at the thought of Morty and her too innocent smiles and sugar sweet laugh going unprotected for the fifteen years before he came into her life made him a little bitter.

He practically snarled when he asked, “Should I ask her if Jerry’s been drugging her and fooling around with her in her sleep? How would she know? And wo-ooooough-uldn’t it just upset her more to hear that sort of shit?” Beth deflated a bit and Rick softened his tone. Jeezus, why was he face-fucking a gift horse in the mouth? “I set her up with some nanobots that monitor her blood chemicals. I should know if someone tries to roofie her again.” He rubbed the back of his neck like he was
embarrassed. “And I told her she should come to me if anything weird happens. Like if she wakes up groggy or sore or whatever…”

Beth’s eyes glistened with tears and Rick’s cybernetic heart didn’t skip a beat. “You’re really are a lifesaver, Dad,” she laughed a little and Rick tipped back the last of his beer, draining half the bottle in one smooth gulp.

“Yeah, yeah. Now she must think I’m some big softie,” he grumbled. “I’m not big on cuddling.”

“I remember,” Beth responded acerbically, a jealous glint in her hazel eyes.

“Old age must be making me soft,” he shook his head. “O-ooooooh-h, and the fact that her father might be fucking her makes me a little more sympathetic.”

“Dad!” Beth reprimanded, her face paling.

“Kid deserves some affection,” was all he conceded to. “You don’t want her growing up to be some emotionally stunted weirdo like us, right?” He clinked his bottle against Beth’s fourth glass of wine.

“Right,” she muttered, clearly in denial, draining her drink in three big gulps. “Better go check on her.”

Rick leaned back into the couch cushions and kicked his legs up onto the coffee table, sniggering quietly to himself when he heard the familiar muted tones of Beth and Jerry arguing. If he wanted, he could probably let the situation spiral out on its own. Now that the seed of doubt had been planted, Jerry had a year, maybe less, before Beth’s suspicions utterly divorced her heart from him - but that didn’t exactly mean they’d split up. He knew this Beth and despite the fact that she liked to pretend Jerry held her back, she clung to him just as tightly because without him there would be no scapegoat for her own failings.

And a divorce wasn’t really enough for Rick anyways. He wanted Jerry out of the picture entirely – no weekend visitations, no feigned casual ‘I was just in the neighborhood’s, no running into him in the grocery store and making forced, stilted conversation. Rick wanted him gone. The sooner the better.

When Rick padded past the stairs on his way to the garage, he overheard a snippet of their fight:

“Morty doesn’t need you to tuck her in Jerry, she’s a teenager already. When was the last time you bothered with that, anyways?” Beth snapped and Rick paused to eavesdrop.

“Well, Morty doesn’t need to be cozying up to Rick either but it’s what she’s doing!” Jerry heatedly whispered back. “If what she needs is a strong father figure, it should be me she’s looking up to and – and cuddling with on the couch, not the alcoholic old man who sleeps in my office!”

“Don’t talk about my dad like that,” Beth said dangerously, the conversation muddling out to indistinct murmurs as Beth closed their bedroom door.

It was with a new spring to his step that Rick sauntered into the garage. With a few taps at the keyboard, he programmed his homebuilt computer to start collecting data on Jerry, compiling its purposely limited database with footage taken from around the house (Rick refused to waste RAM on Jerry but if he wanted things to play out the way they should, he needed the performance to be spot on). Since Jerry spent most of his time there, Rick figured he’d have a fleshed out, authentic Jerry-bot functioning at full order by the next morning.

With that chugging away in the background, Rick turned his attention to the information streaming in
He found a mostly full bottle of vodka and started chugging from it, relishing the almost non-existent sting on his burned-to-nothing taste buds before he turned his attention to making the house portal proof to any gun that wasn’t his own. That, at least, was the kind of challenge he could get off on.

It was an indeterminable amount of timelater that he’d rigged up an old generator and half a zoranthium metasplicer to shield the neighborhood; not from the portals themselves – that proved to be more trouble than it was worth (he’d have to make a few too many stops in Federation territory to get the supplies and he wasn’t fool enough to press his luck there just yet), but from the genetic sequencing that 99.9% of Rick’s had in common. Slightly rewiring his own had been an *interesting* risk but he’d found a strand that practically functioned as the DNA equivalent of an appendix and shifted it just enough to register him as different from all the other Ricks. For a brief second before he pulled the trigger on the re-sequencing, he’d wondered whether he was about to turn himself into a pile of mushy flesh on the off chance it’d keep a Morty safe but he downed enough vodka to give Mother Nature the middle finger and plunged the needle into his vein. Besides a slight tingle, he looked and felt the exact same on the other side but he had a secret hidden in his code.

He felt a small twinge of victory at that change. Now he was different from the Rick-herd. He and his Morty were unique in a world full of duplicates and all the rest of them could suck his fat one.

More than a little drunk and giddy on his latest corruption of the natural world, he shot a portal to Morty’s room; partially to test that the resequencing had worked and he hadn’t wound up locking himself out of his own fucking house and partially to watch their two coordinates blip to the same set of numbers. She stirred at the sound of his portal closing.

“Morty,” he sloppily whispered, kneeling on her bed and shaking her shoulder until she blinked up at him. For a moment her eyes glimmered in fear but then she rubbed them and the look was gone, Rick explaining it away as a trick of the dim lighting. “Morty, I’m a fucking genius.”

“Rick, what-” she mumbled but cut off with a gasp when he started mouthing wetly at her throat.

“I’m a genius and a fucking god, Morty,” he whispered into her shoulder, tugging her up and pulling her against his chest. “I rewrote the fucking genome, Morty.”

“Oh – okay, Rick,” she muttered against his sweater where he had pressed her face. Her arms tentatively pat him on the back and Rick stifled a chuckle.

“Come celebrate with me, Morty,” he urged, ignoring the way she sucked in a deep breath when he
released his grip and let her pull away. “Come on, Morty, let’s – let’s live it up.” He staggered to his feet but the bed rushed up at him when he tried to veer in the direction of her dresser, determined to get her back in her clothes so he could drag her out. Maybe she’d even have a drink for once. She normally refused all his offers to buy her first drink but she’d promised him, *she’d promised him whatever he wanted.*

Morty’s hands came into view, her teal painted nails sparking a delicious rush of possessiveness that licked down his spine like lightning. “Looks – seems like you already lived it up, Rick,” she answered softly as she grabbed at the shoulders of his lab coat and tugged. When had he fallen off the bed? Why was he on his knees?

He tried to swat away her tugging, but his hands were heavy as the dark weight of drunken sleep fell upon him like a skyscraper collapsing. His face was pressed into something soft, something that smelled like flowers and long hair and shy happy smiles and that was just fine.

The last moment of consciousness he could have sworn he felt the soft brush of fingers in his hair and then the abyss swallowed him whole.

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When he woke the next morning, it was to the rancid taste of his own mouth and a dull pulse of pain radiating from his kneecaps in steady throbs.

He was kneeling on the ground of Morty’s bedroom, upper body collapsed over the foot of her bed, an impressive puddle of drool stretching under his cheek and explaining the desert dryness of his tongue. Morty was gone; judging by the sunlight streaming through her window, probably at school. It took Rick a moment to remember that her coordinates were now hardwired into his brain; he didn’t need to *guess* where she was anymore. He knew for a fucking fact. Well done Drunk Rick.

He groaned when he eased himself off his knees, rolling over and stretching his legs out, willing the blood to flow back into his neglected limbs, draining the last sip in his flask to numb some of the pain.

Beth would be at work by now which meant the only other person home was Jerry, the worst possible company when you’re trying to nurse a hangover. Sure enough, when he shot a portal into the kitchen and staggered through it, Jerry was there, a carton of juice thumping to the floor and spilling its contents all over the linoleum. “Jeezus Rick, can’t you use a door like a normal person?” he bitched and Rick didn’t bother to spare him a glare as he ducked his head under the running faucet and drank from the spigot. “Or drink from a glass?”

Rick stood up straight, eyes boring out the window over the sink as he did the math on how soon he could get Jerry out of his hair for good. Right now it distinctly felt like *not soon enough,* especially when Jerry started whining, “And for the record this is *your* mess. I wouldn’t have dropped the juice if you walked around the house instead of using your sci-fi mumbo-jumbo-”

The complaints sharply cut off when Rick stepped through the swirl of green and out into the garage. Time to check on his pet project.

In a flash of insight Rick congratulated *himself* for, the computer displayed a variety of compromising pictures of Morty that it had edited to look like they were taken with Jerry’s shitty,
behind-the-times phone. Some were seemingly innocuous, like the medium shot of the peaceful slack of Morty’s face when she’d fallen asleep on the couch last week watching interdimensional cable. Other’s bordered the risqué, like the one of her wearing Summer’s borrowed shorts on a hot august day, bent over the kitchen counter reaching for a glass.

Then there were the truly problematic, like the image captured through the cracked bathroom door as Morty undressed before stepping into the shower. That one had come from Rick’s cybernetic eye fairly early after he’d moved in. He hadn’t exactly meant to walk in on her naked, but bodies were meaningless flesh sacks and the sooner she lost whatever hang-ups a teenage girl could be expected to have about hers, the sooner she’d jump ahead of the herd.

Whatever the case, the pictures were perfect. They painted a landscape of prolonged, systematic abuse. He added the photo he’d taken the day before, his spend dripping down the folds of Morty’s sex, and then printed them out and snuck back into the den, tucking them between the pages of the Nicholas Sparks book Jerry hid his spare cash in. The same one Summer raided almost weekly for spending money. Of course Jerry hadn’t had any extra money in months – his hiding place practically a thing of the past - but Rick had been planting small bills there ever since to keep Summer’s interest.

With that done, Rick slid down the ladder into the underground bunker below the garage. He keyed in the code that flipped open the cabinet where he stored his robots, grimacing at their seemingly-sleeping faces – one made in his own likeness, the others each representing a member of the Smith family. He’d started with Morty’s shortly after he moved in, mostly thinking it would alleviate any potential guilt about this Beth functioning without her youngest daughter should he give into his baser instincts to abscond with and sell the girl. But eventually he’d found having spares around for everyone was pretty useful. It was easy to remotely command them into action if, say, he and Morty got wrapped up in an adventure that would surpass the time limit of Beth’s tightlipped acceptance. Or when Morty’s school had a parent teacher conference and apparently he didn’t qualify as her parent/guardian. Or that one time he’d taken Summer to an alien hospital to get tested for STDs and she was hypersensitive to the thought of her parents noticing her empty bed.

As it was, this mission was going to be the true test of their merit. Or well, of his Jerry-bots merit, to be particular.

Rick hated looking at the thing - had hated building the thing - and had relegated the computer to the role of modeling the high-tech silicone skin that he fitted around the standard humanoid skeleton you could get a-dime-a-dozen in the right neck of the galaxy. At the time, he’d deeply considered birthing this would-be version of his daughter’s husband into celibacy keeping it ken-doll smooth between the legs; one small victory to smirk about behind his hand when the real Jerry ribbed him at dinner. But in the end he couldn’t in good conscious half-ass a job like that. So Jerry-bot had all the right equipment, the computer referencing the security feeds to create an accurate replica. Now Rick was glad he hadn’t given into the deep-seated, eighteen-year-old urge to play out his castration fantasies on Jerry-bot. He might need him fully intact.

While he’d slept, Rick’s computer had thrown together an exhaustive report of Jerry personal history, mannerisms, and odd quirks. It was nearly as comprehensive as he kept the programming which ran his and Morty’s replicas, except Jerry’s had a new addition - a new perversion - and a very specific predilection towards his youngest daughter. He made a mental note to destroy the thing entirely once its task was completed lest it start getting any funny ideas.

Rick tapped at the panel feeding a thick wire into the back of Jerry-bot’s neck, transferring the new data from his main computer to the automaton. He tried not to look too closely at the footage of the few times in recent history when Beth and Jerry had attempted sex – less because it was his daughter
and more because it was just too pathetic to watch. It made him sad for Beth, for women, and for humanity at large. Most of the occasions were fairly routine, looking more like mutual masturbation than sex even when their genitals met. Then there were the few times that Jerry had initiated something stranger: the few times he tried to talk Beth into laying very still while he plowed into her. And then there was the one distinct incident where she was completely passed out drunk and Jerry fucked her limp body, spewing self-congratulatory nonsense through his noisiest orgasm recorded to date.

The computer had summarized that one for Rick in a paragraph distinctly lacking any descriptive words or details, his own programming predicting and trying to avoid Rick’s destructive rage. The attempt was only semi-successful. Rick immediately rooted out Jerry’s prized coin collection (if buying fake coins from a telemarketer could even be considered a coin collection) and dissolved it with acid, returning the lumpy, unrecognizable pile of bubbling goop back to the shelf he’d found them on.

He wasn’t totally sure why Jerry had developed a sudden taste for somnophilia (his internet search history proved it was really starting to take over as his favorite flavor though he hadn’t quite figured out the clinical word for it yet) but Rick was fairly sure it had something to do with whatever happened to Jerry while he’d been plugged into the Zigerion simulation – at least the dates aligned and somehow that one day had really spiraled the rest of Jerry’s life out of control. Other than that rough guess, he really didn’t need to know the why – what mattered was that Jerry had a specific fetish, one that Beth was at least peripherally aware of, and one that would make Jerry-bot’s future foray with Morty-bot a lot more believable and horrific.

After typing in a few more commands instructing the AI inside of Jerry-bot to learn from the footage; to mimic sounds and phrases and favorite techniques, Rick turned to his Morty-bot, her body lax against the wall of her locker looking for all the world as if the real Morty had slumped over and fallen asleep standing up. He hoped they wouldn’t get to the point where she’d be needed but she was a robot so it wasn’t like she could experience trauma.

By the time Summer came walking up the drive, a backpack slung over one shoulder, Rick was just putting the finishing touches on a series of devices that would spread the Rick-blocker radius from the two miles of surrounding neighborhood to the entire planet. A quick check with Morty’s coordinates told him she was still at the school and he frowned. Hadn’t he dream-cepted most of the staff out of giving Morty detentions? What was she still doing there?

“Hey Grandpa Rick,” Summer greeted him. “What’re those?”

“Sa-auuuugh-tellites, Summer. Where’s your sister?” Summer pouted (not nearly as charming an effect as it was on Morty; being pitiable wasn’t Summer’s strong suit) and nudged one metal cylinder with her toe.

“She said she wanted to stay and work on some stuff,” Summer said, scrunching up her face in a frown.

“Morty voluntarily stayed behind at school?” Rick deadpanned, screwing one of the final panels into place and glaring up at the sun cresting over Summer’s shoulder when she shrugged. He’d had a feeling Morty might try some kind of avoidance technique but he had really hoped she’d taken his last lesson to heart. After all their time together, she still thought she could get away from him? And after he’d been so nice as to let her stay the whole day at school too. He felt the press of the portal gun in his pocket and figured it was time to remind her that he got to decide how and where she spent her time.

“Yeah, she was talking to some kids her own age for once,” Summer ruminated, absentmindedly checking
her phone screen while a muscle in her jaw twitched. “Is it just me,” she said lightly, almost like an afterthought, “or has she been a little off lately?” Rick was impressed. The loose way she cocked her hip, the casual head tilt; she was trying not to sound worried. But Rick didn’t miss the glance she shot him from the corner of her eye.

Rick stood up from his crouch, stretching his back and relishing the loud pop as his spine realigned, scanning his oldest granddaughter top to toe. Summer was the real threat in the house. The girl was smart and unlike her mother, her affection for Rick limited itself to enjoying the odd adventure and occasionally trading menial tasks for money or weed. She wasn’t the type to remain inactive in the face of her sister’s abuse. What Rick really needed was Summer on his side. If she were involved, there was no way Beth could sweep anything under the rug.

“I’m gonna give it to you str-aauuuuh-aight, Summer,” Rick said, dusting metal filings from his pants and leaning against his desk. “I think your dad has been taking advantage of Morty.”

To her testament, Summer’s face didn’t morph into the mask of horror he’d been half expecting. Her jaw dropped enough to puff out a little breath of surprise and her eyes opened a little wider but she fought off an uncomfortable frown. “Woah – okay… Um, why?”

“Call it a fucking hunch.” Rick crossed his arms and frowned at the driveway. “O-uuuuug-oh, and yesterday when we got back from the movie your mother found Morty tits out and drugged up.”

Summer jolted like she’d been slapped on the back, shock finally blanching the color from her face. Her mouth made a little ‘o’ as she blinked in quick succession. “No. Way.” Summer asserted, more out of shock than disbelief.

“Yes way, Summer,” Rick sighed blandly.

She squinted at him. “You don’t think she’s, like, freebasing or something, do you?” Summer offered skeptically, her voice hopeful. “I mean, maybe she’s just experimenting.”

Rick almost laughed. “Roofies aren’t exactly a recreational drug, Sum-Sum.” Rick tried not to sound too sarcastic and mostly failed but he frowned before he added, “And she had bruises.” He gestured to his own chest and neck with a finger and Summer covered her mouth with her hand.

“She wanted to come with…” Summer whispered half to herself, her eyes darting between the cracks in the driveway. She was somewhat breathless when she asked, “What did Mom say about it?”

“You can probably guess,” Rick sighed a little theatrically and the small way Summer’s face crumpled in on itself for half a second told him that she wasn’t as blind to her parent’s failings as he’d thought she was.

“So what do we do?” Summer asked, and the way her eyes blazed hard and she squared her shoulders, firm resolve darkening her voice, made him respect her a little more.

“Without your mom onboard? Not much we can do, Summer. She wants more solid evidence and I’m wo-ouuuuh-rking on it.” That he most certainly was.

“If you need help with something, I’ve got a paper I’ve been wanted to put off,” Summer half-smiled before the forced expression crumbled and she almost immediately burst into tears.

“Hey, hey,” Rick soothed, opening his arms and letting her step into him, her tears wetting the lapel of his lab coat. She was taller than Morty, her face slotting against his shoulder instead of against his chest. She smelled like sweet, youthful perfume and a warm breeze. Her body was soft in all the
places you’d expect from a teenage girl but still Rick found his thoughts drifting to Morty and how holding her against him felt like grappling with a bag of wire hangers – a new preference of his he baffled at silently while Summer hiccupped.

“Hey, shh shhh,” he soothed, his eyes flat as they watched a truck rumble down the street. “Remember when you told me I had to give Morty boundaries?” Rick asked, a little humorous huff in his voice while he glared daggers into the middle distance. He really didn’t like people telling him what to do, especially concerning Morty.

Summer sobbed a little harder against him, her fists bunched in his lab coat. “I take it back, Grandpa,” she mumbled into his shoulder, her voice cracking. “We have to help her.” She pulled back and her eyes were two burning coals as they jumped around the features of his face. Yeah, he definitely needed her with him on this one. She was smart as a whip and if she started suspecting what was going on between him and Morty, if she started noticing Morty’s strained behavior or jumpy demeanor, Rick needed her to immediately peg the blame on Jerry rather than start asking too-smart questions. She sniffled loudly and wiped her nose on the back of her arm. “You have to help her, Grandpa Rick. She trusts you.”

Rick smiled thinly. “I’ll take care of it.”

Summer cleared her voice, and wiped at the tears on her face, scrubbing at her nose. “Okay, I’m okay. I’ll – I’ll keep an eye out too. We won’t let anything happen to Morty, right?”

“Co-oooug-urse not.” He patted her shoulder. “I kn-eeeuuh-ew I could count on you,” Rick said with a put-upon grin that she shakily returned.

“Where are you looking for evidence? Are you hacking his phone and computer and stuff?” she slid onto the stool, studying the alien text scrolling across his computer screen. He didn’t have the heart to tell her it was a raunchy alien story streaming live from the Horsehead Nebula so he unscrewed his flask and took a gulp.

“All I got from that was a better understanding of Jerry’s disturbing taste in porn.”

Summer scrunched up her nose and held up a hand. “Please don’t tell me about it,” she pleaded and Rick chuckled. But she was still looking at him expectantly, awaiting a task, and Rick burped as he mulled over his options.

“You know, there is something you could do for Morty,” Rick conceded, capping his flask and fishing out a roll of cash. Summer squared her shoulders earnestly and blinked serious eyes at him expectantly. “You could go shopping.”

“What?” Summer intoned blankly, her glance darting to Rick’s hands where he was unfurling a few hundred dollar bills.

“Yeah. Get her some girl clothes,” Rick shrugged. “Her dress got ruined the other night and I think she’s too shy to admit she liked looking a little more…” he spun his hands in the air, a little shocked he was even having this conversation.

“Feminine?” Summer supplied helpfully and Rick nodded.

“Here,” he handed her the bills and Summer pocketed them. “Whatever you don’t spend on her is yours. But get her some dresses or skirts or fucking whatever.”

Summer was looking at him like he was speaking a foreign language and he scowled at her. “Why do you care what she wears?” she asked, a coy smirk tilting up the corner of her mouth like she knew
some fucking secret.

“\textit{I do-ooooough-n’it},” Rick answered. Except he kind of did. While he’d tinkered with the satelites and absently passed the daytime hours, he’d spent a lot of time thinking about that yellow dress and the enticing way Morty had lifted up her skirt. He wouldn’t hate having easier access than her jeans allowed; bathroom quickies were a particular favorite of his, especially when he was amped up on adventuring adrenaline. Plus she’d seemed oddly pleased with the way the extra fabric swished around her legs – he had caught her absently turning her hips back and forth while he’d been cracking the safe, her lips curled up in a goofy smile as the fabric billowed around her legs.

Diane had taken care of that sort of stuff for Beth when she was young but Rick had long ago noticed the Smith girls were mostly left to their own devices. “I don’t care, Summer,” he reiterated because she hadn’t stopped grinning. “But Morty could use a bit of a confidence boost.”

Summer quirked an eyebrow at him but her smile softened around the edges. “Okay. But only because I get to spend your money too.”

Rick chuckled. “Atta girl.”

His laughter died short when the reading for Morty’s location blipped suddenly to a drastically different number. He recognized the dimension and planet coordinates immediately; knew them almost as well as the coordinates to this house, or the ones to the garage where he first invented interdimensional travel, or the ones to the dead-ship turned space-station he’d used as safe harbor intermittently for the last eighteen years.

\textit{The Citadel.}

\textit{Morty was at the Citadel.}
Chapter Seven

Rick’s first instinct was to shoot a portal to Morty’s location and dive into it with the sort of reckless abandon that immediately disgusted him, especially once he realized his portal gun was already in hand, dial set to her coordinates. Fading back into the present, he noticed Summer was staring at him, one eyebrow raised as she repeated, “Grandpa Rick? Are you listening?”

He shook himself out of his haze, brain running a thousand calculations a minute in the background while he turned Summer out of his stool. “What, hey!” she complained, sliding to her feet. “Come on, I was just joking!”

“What? I don’t care. Now get out. Something just came up and you need to leave,” he was already shoving her out the door, mentally tallying which of his weapons caused the most damage with the least amount of noise.

“Is it about Morty,” Summer asked, her face open and worried, hands braced on either side of the doorframe so he couldn’t slam it in her face. “Did you think of something?”

“Yes it’s about Morty now get out!” her hands slipped loose and she stumbled into the house. “And don’t tell anyone about what we talked about. Especially not your sister.”

“No duh,” she rolled her eyes and sashayed away, casting one last skeptical glance over her shoulder before disappearing into the kitchen.

The door slammed behind him as he twisted the knob on the washing machine to the delicate cycle (a feature no one in the Smith house bothered with) and his weapons cabinet slid open revealing his expansive ammunition stash. He had no idea what he was about to walk into on the Citadel but he could guess it wasn’t going to be pretty. Rick buckled a holster around his waist, tucking a laser pistol into one side and a disintegrator ray-gun into the other.

If he played this smart, he should be able to snatch her up and wipe out her kidnappers before they knew what hit them. In all likelihood, they were working in secrecy – an attempt to keep the prize to themselves – and if that was the case, he could follow the chain of information with minimal persuasion and wipe out everyone who’d heard about her existence. Glowering at the wall, Rick reminded himself that he was good at persuasion, particularly when it came to other Ricks. He slung a larger rifle across his back and ran over his schematics for the Rick-blocker, wracking his brain for the flaw that let someone slip through. Rick didn’t make mistakes. So how had one managed to get through?

His stomach twinged when he thought how clueless Morty would be in the hands of another Rick. How helpless. She had no idea she was unique, had no idea what monsters Ricks were or how cruel they could be. He hadn’t ever told her, hadn’t warned her of the dangers when he knew he’d be half warning her off himself. Selfishly he’d revered that sparkle in her eye that was just for him – the one that would inevitably dim once she realized there were countless iterations of himself and they were all as fucking terrible and impressive as he was.

He studied her moving coordinate and spun the dial on his portal gun, trying to work out what part of the Citadel the numbers indicated. It wasn’t anywhere near the High Council in city center, nor the black market on the west side; the two places he had assumed her kidnappers would be most likely to take her. When the answer didn’t materialize immediately in his brain, he muttered angrily to himself before he dialed the number far enough back from Morty’s to make a silent entrance and shot a portal at the wall.
He stepped through the green swirl and out into an alley, the smell of rotten garbage and wet cement replacing the oil/ozone tang of his garage. He tucked his portal gun away and slotted the rifle against his shoulder, studying the poorly graffitied words ‘MORTY WUZ HERE’ flashing brilliantly yellow against the dull brick wall and surrounding night. Suddenly it clicked why he hadn’t recognized the coordinates.

He was in Mortytown.

And then he understood why his Rick-blocker hadn’t worked: the people who’d portaled her here weren’t Ricks, they were Morties.

He almost laughed at himself and how absurdly over-armed he was as the frantic energy that came with working up to facing off against the only real threats to him wound down into a quiet, furious aggravation. Morties should be easy to handle but Rick had heard stories about the kind of kids that ran around Mortytown. And sure, they didn’t measure up to a Rick but he’d lived this long by erring on the side of caution.

A quick glance at her coordinates led him to a rusted fire escape and he scaled it, watching their two numbers count closer together. At the third floor he paused, peering through the half open window into a surprisingly cozy scene. Two boy-Morties shuffled together, tightly packed in a bleak little kitchen, milling around a grubby folding table. One of them he vaguely recognized as the late ξ-003’s Morty. Rick couldn’t say what made him so certain it was the same Morty; he looked almost identical to the other one busily stirring a pot over a hot plate, but something about that neglected but imminently hopeful tilt of his eyebrows made Rick sure it was the same kid. Rick cursed himself for the moment of compassion that had spared that boy-Morty’s life. He should have sent the little bastard straight to the blender dimension, even if his cowering and pouting had triggered some newly hardwired sympathies.

Stranger still was how the brief scan of the one stirring the pot raised the hair on the back of Rick’s neck in an intuitive prickle. The Eerie-Morty’s motions weren’t the same twitchy jerks that plagued nearly every Morty; the practiced way he flipped three mugs and poured the contents of his pot between them was smooth and effortless, his lax face apathetic, his big familiar eyes almost dead when they swept the short distance over to Morty.

And then there was Morticia, seated in the least broken looking chair and chewing her bottom lip. She was jiggling her leg under the table, the motion shaking half the flimsy furniture in the room. Her arms were crossed tightly and her wide-eyed attention was split between the two boy-Morties who kept shooting her furtive looks, the grimy stains dripping down the walls, and the only door in the room – the two Morties standing between her and it. Her eyes jumped once to the window and Rick willed her to see him but it was too dark in the alley. He was crouched outside the square of orange light the bare tungsten bulb cast on the fire escape, and he was sure all she’d see in the glass was a reflection of herself and the bleak room around her.

Rick wasn’t sure how they had managed to compel her to accompany them - he’d seen her take on aliens twice her size out of sheer panic, and there weren’t any noticeable weapons pointed at her. Then again, it wouldn’t surprise him at all if Morty was too soft to go full maniac on an alternate version of herself out of some idiotic idea of ‘hearing them out’. She was too fucking kind-hearted. At some point, the universe was going to stamp that shit out of her but until then Rick supposed he had to do his best to keep her from getting too hurt. After one more sweep of the room, Rick decided that unless the kitchen cabinets were filled with ammunitions or the crappy folding table had a pistol taped to the bottom of it (both of which Rick would have absolutely done, plus a few other hidden compartments, obviously) there didn’t even seem to be a gun in the room except for the conspicuous and familiar bulge of a portal gun tucked into Eerie-Morty’s jeans.
Now how did he get that? Rick wondered. Morties weren’t supposed to have portal guns, especially Morties running around on the Citadel. Just what had Rick stumbled upon? He decided to delay his original idea - which was to immediately remove Morty from the scene, find out who else might know about her, and cross those two off the list – because now he was just the slightest bit curious.

The two boy-Morties whispered to each other under Morty’s watchful gaze before ξ-003-Morty’s cheeks turned bright red and he padded over to join her. He nearly sent the table crashing down with his chair leg when he tried to sit and the awkward laugh (almost recognizable except for its slightly different pitch) bubbled out of him borderline-hysterically. Eerie-Morty divvied up the mugs, handing hers over with a friendly smile Morty struggled to return. The dead look in his eyes was gone, the glassy, over-vulnerable, familiar look of a Morty slotted back into place, the façade so complete Rick would wonder whether he were imagining the earlier blankness if he were a less confident man.

“I’m glad your Rick wasn’t – didn’t get too upset the other night,” ξ-003-Morty stammered, leaning his elbows on the table and jolting when the plastic tilted under his weight. Eerie-Morty steadied it with two quick hands.

“Oh, yeah – no – everything was totally normal,” Morty responded quickly, voice a little too high, and Rick struggled not to roll his eyes. Real smooth, Morty. Luckily, in a room entirely occupied by the same anxious teenager, her tone went unremarked upon except for Eerie-Morty’s little head tilt. “Yup, we’re just… normal now.” She stared into the bottom of her mug and frowned. “Is that why you came, because you were worried?”

ξ-003-Morty glanced to his identical counterpart who replied for him. “Actually, after I heard about you, I had to meet you for myself,” Eerie-Morty answered, and now it was Morty’s turn to flush, her mouth opening and closing in a self-conscious stammer. “You told him – I – we –”

“Not that! I - I didn’t tell him that,” ξ-003-Morty stage whispered, his hand darting out like it wanted to land on Morty’s shoulder but decided against it when she cringed away. Eerie-Morty’s face creased in a frown and Rick didn’t like the look of it. It was dangerous, predatory almost, and it had no right to be on the face of a Morty.

“What didn’t you tell me?” Eerie-Morty asked dangerously and Rick saw a wave of tension crest against ξ-003-Morty’s shoulders.

Morty wasn’t immune to the sudden heaviness, her gaze darting between the two boys before she announced, “Listen, I - I should be getting back to my dimension. My Rick’ll probably be worried about me.” She set her mug down, sloshing liquid over the edge before she pushed away from the table. “Thanks – thanks for the drink and, uh, the concern I guess.”

“Wait, sorry, I didn’t mean –” the dangerousness leaked out of his face like water through a strainer but Rick didn’t miss the way ξ-003-Morty’s back stayed bunched up tight, his eyes wide and fearful and locked on Eerie-Morty like he was trapped in a room with an unpredictable animal. “I just mean - I’ve never met a girl-Morty before. They’re – you’re - really rare…” Eerie-Morty looked adequately humbled and shy, rubbing at the back of his neck and studying the grimy table.

“R-rare?” Morty repeated back, curiosity lacing her tone. Rick briefly debated what was more important to him: keeping Morty in the dark about her own exceptionality or finding out why two strange Morties in possession of a portal gun would bother dragging her to some rundown apartment in Mortytown. With the first – well, Rick was a firm believer in a ‘the less Morty knew, the better’ and the sort of revelation they were careening towards right now might go straight to her already
empty head. But if there was some scheme going on revolving around her, if these two Morties had friends – friends who knew about her – Rick had to know and he had to take them all out. He didn’t relish the idea of killing Morties (especially when they all reminded him so much of his own) but keeping Morty a secret was his number one priority.

Rick breathed out an uneven sigh and let the shoe drop. “Very rare,” ξ-003-Morty supplied, smiling when Morty stopped looking like she was ready to run for the hills.

“Literally one-in-a-million,” Eerie-Morty chimed in, hands wrapped around his mug. “You didn’t know?”

Morty didn’t raise her eyes from the stained table when she responded, “I didn’t even – meeting him was the first time I even heard there were other Morties.” She nodded her chin to ξ-003-Morty. She tucked a teal-colored finger nail between her teeth before jerking it hard away from her mouth and tucking both her hands between her knees. “Or other Ricks.”

ξ-003-Morty huffed a breath out his nose. “Figures. Ricks are real jerks.”

“That’s an understatement,” Eerie-Morty grumbled.

Rick, who had braced himself for the inevitable diatribe of bitching Morty would unleash about him, was a little surprised when she instead stuttered out, “What – What are your Ricks like?”

ξ-003-Morty shared a meaningful glance with Eerie-Morty before he answered, “We’re… kinda between Ricks. But - but jeez, they’re all the same anyways.” He was trying to make a joke but neither Morty laughed, the jovial tone falling flat as the bare light bulb above them buzzed and flickered.

“What happened to them-” Morty frowned, finally lifting her eyes to dart between the two boys. “– to your Ricks?”

ξ-003-Morty stiffened and kicked his legs under the table. “My Rick got shot.” His unfocused gaze landed on the table and he licked his lips before continuing, “Same with the third – or – or was that the fourth? My second Rick blew up. Third Rick…” Morty frowned up at the ceiling, “my third Rick overdosed but I wasn’t even assigned to him long enough to make it off the Citadel.” Morty’s brow wrinkled up in a frown but the boy-Morty kept talking, “So yeah, my fourth Rick got shot and my fifth…” ξ-003-Morty’s eyes landed guiltily on Morty while her eyebrows shot up expectantly. “- he…”

“Ricks,” Eerie-Morty interrupted with a disdainful shrug. “They die, mostly.” There was just a hint of something like humor in his voice and that intuitive shiver raced up Rick’s back again. This kid wasn’t eerie, he was a fucking monster. Evil-Morty; that’s what he was.

“My Rick - the Rick from my dimension - he died a couple years ago,” ξ-003-Morty explained, the words laced with a touch of melancholy. “Shot in a drug-heist gone wrong. I made it out but my Earth… I couldn’t go home so I got thrown in the system-”

“The system?” Morty interrupted.

“School. Well - what Ricks call school. They don’t teach English or History or anything more complex than what we might need to know to help our newly assigned Ricks.” The derision with which Evil-Morty had described the Morty Academy was so palpable Rick could taste it in the rancid air. “Mostly that’s the best way to say ‘yes, Rick’ or ‘what a great idea, Rick’ or ‘let me throw myself in front of a bullet for you, Rick’.”
Morty’s eyes were wide and Rick watched her throat bob as she swallowed. “Jeez… there’s a school for that?” She almost laughed, an uncomfortable, anxious sound. “That’s – that’s pretty fucked.” Both boys chuckled, tight and self-pitying.

“It’s not all bad,” ξ-003-Morty defended, shrinking under Evil-Morty’s glare. “What? It’s – I met a lot of real nice Morties there. It’s not their faults the Citadel is – is broken. At least for us.”

“It’s broken for everyone.” Evil-Morty insisted leaning forward, his eyes bright with intensity. “That’s why we brought you here.”

“Why? So - so I can be a better Morty?” She scowled into her lap and muttered, “I’m already pretty familiar with the whole ‘yes, Rick’ thing.”

Evil-Morty outright laughed at that. “No, Morty. We brought you here to make a difference.”

Rick’s shoulders rose and fell with his deep even breaths, his rifle zeroed in on Evil-Morty’s chest, right where his little Morty heart was at work pumping all his little Morty blood. This bastard wanted to start a coup. Rick didn’t love the Citadel – no he honestly and openly hated it – but the idea of the mecca of Rick-civilization being brought down by a rag-tag team of Morties was fucking disgraceful. And that they were trying to drag his Morty into what would inevitably become a suicide mission was unacceptable.

Morty, clueless as ever, hadn’t caught up to what Evil-Morty had hinted at. “What kind of difference,” she asked, skepticism clear in her voice.

“The Citadel is a tool of oppression,” Evil-Morty said in a voice that reminded Rick of televised sermons. “It needs to be taken down.”

“I –” Morty flushed and Rick willed her not to fall for this radical bullshit. “You guys keep talking about The Citadel but – what is that?”

“It’s where we are now,” ξ-003-Morty spoke over Evil-Morty. “A space station – a whole city of Ricks and Morties.”

“There’s a whole city of us?” Morty asked, shocked.

“Like I said,” Evil-Morty shrugged. “Millions.”

Morty’s mouth hung agape. “Millions…” she faintly whispered.

“And that’s just here,” ξ-003-Morty continued, clearly not privy to the almost-panic attack Morty was spiraling into. “We’re just one of infinite selves.” It sounded like he was reciting something from that Morty Academy and judging from the sour look on Evil-Morty’s face, he thought so too – or maybe he didn’t like being lumped in with all the other Morties. Rick wouldn’t be surprised. This one did seem different.

“So there’s just… infinite Morties going around - wandering around with infinite Ricks?”

“In all shapes and sizes,” ξ-003-Morty said happily. “There’s cyclops-Morties and ghost-Morties and cowboy-Morties and Morties who wear long-sleeves.”

Evil-Morty nodded seriously. “But so far as I can tell, there’s only one Morticia.”

If Morty had been pale before, she blanched at those words.
“Math – mathematically that doesn’t make sense.” Rick wracked his brain for if he ever heard the word ‘mathematically’ come out of Morty’s mouth before. He highly doubted it.

“But it’s true,” Evil-Morty shrugged. “And that’s why we need you Morty.”

“Wha-” Morty was clearly still catching up.

“The Morties need someone to rally behind,” he continued heatedly, eyes glowing with ambition.

“What so – since I’ve got – got a pair of boobies you think it should be me?” she stammered, aghast and outraged. Rick could definitely see Evil-Morty’s point, especially when both their eyes glanced down to her unimpressive chest at the word like they couldn’t resist the compulsion.

“They’re – you’re a legend, Morty,” ξ-003-Morty diverted. “Morties have been waiting for a – a rallying point, and that could be you!”

“I – I think I need to go,” Morty said again, pushing her chair back and standing up. “I’m not – you’ve got the wrong Morty. My Rick is – I gotta get back home before –” she tried to make her way to the door but both boy Morties stood up, effectively blocking her path.

“Ricks don’t care about Morties,” Evil-Morty said deadly flat, freezing the other occupants of the room. “Your Rick doesn’t care about you, he’s using you.” Morty looked stricken and Rick’s finger tightened over the trigger of his riffle.

“I – my Rick isn’t like that…” she practically whispered, voice less than confident.

“All Rick’s use Morties. Can you honestly say you’ve never felt used by your Rick?” The hollow, black-eyed glance Morty shot to Evil-Morty was like a starter’s pistol for Rick.

“Te-eauh-a party’s over, idiots,” Rick growled as he shoved up the sticky window-pane and braced a leg on the frame, his rifle aimed cleanly at Evil-Morty’s forehead, the smug sonofabitch raising his hands with a condescending smile and looking for all the world like he’d been expecting him to join them. “Morty, get over here.” ξ-003-Morty was the one who twitched in the direction of the window and Rick sighed heavily. “Not. You.”

Morty swallowed and blinked away the haunted pit of her eyes. “Rick, don’t – don’t hurt anyone okay?”

“Just get over here, Morty,” Rick repeated, stepping into the room and jerking his head in the direction of the window. “Climb down to the alley and wait for me there.” Morty dropped her eyes to the floor as she shuffled behind ξ-003-Morty’s empty chair, her face pale. Evil-Morty glanced to her once, his look too calculating for Rick’s liking so he barked, “Eyes on me, kid,” as he hitched his rifle up higher.

“He’s going to kill us, Morty,” Evil-Morty said flatly, his eyes cold and hard and boring into Rick’s. “He’s gonna kill us just like he killed his fifth Rick,” he nudged his chin in ξ-003-Morty’s direction who blanched at the words and struggled to make himself smaller while he glared daggers at Evil-Morty.

Morty froze, just barely out of Rick’s reach. “What?”

“Morty,” Rick demanded dangerously.

“He killed your Rick, didn’t he?” Evil-Morty asked ξ-003-Morty who nodded reluctantly, his face scrunching up like he thought the act would expedite his death. The rage that pounded sudden and
furiously in the back of Rick’s skull demanded he make that thought a reality. “He killed your Rick for finding out about her and then he sent you to an abandoned dimension, banishing you from your home.”

Morty stepped back into the folding table when Rick advanced on her, determined to drag her out the window if he had to. “R-Rick?” He watched that sparkle of trust that glimmered in the back of her eyes flicker like a wavering candle.

“Morty, these idiots kidnapped you. Why are you even listening to them?”

Evil-Morty snorted. “Kidnapped? You think we kidnapped her?” He erupted into laughter and Morty’s face clouded with fear. Rick wasn’t surprised; he could feel the anger radiating off of him like heat from a fire. “We invited her and she came willingly. What, you think she can’t make her own decisions?” Evil-Morty tilted his head and Rick hated the disdain that swept across him like a wave. “Or maybe you just want to make them for her.”

Rick pulled the trigger, more than happy to watch the boy’s leering head evaporate. What he didn’t expect was the teal-ripple of a nano-fiber defense mesh to deflect his laser blast at the opposite wall, searing a perfectly round hole through to the neighboring apartment and likely the three past that. He could hear screaming from the other side as the edges of the hole smoldered.

“Morty, come here,” Rick shouted, using her frozen shock as an opportunity to grab her wrist and tug her against him. That little evil weasel had more tricks up his sleeve than Rick had imagined but he immediately felt better with Morty close at hand.

“Rick?! Rick – what the hell?!” She wrestled against his hold but his attention was zeroed in on Evil-Morty who had taken the opportunity to dive behind the kitchen cabinets.

Rick shifted his gun to ξ-003-Morty who seized up in fright. “I - I have no idea what’s going on!” he shouted frantically, lifting his hands higher and Rick marked him as a non-threat, at least for now. It was Evil-Morty who was the problem, proving it as he reappeared over the counter, a blaster of his own in hand.

“For being so against Ricks, someone sure was spoiled,” Rick growled. “That sort of technology - Ricks usually keep the good stuff for themselves.”

“Oh, he tried to,” Evil-Morty said and a trickle of cool fear slid down Rick’s back. “I’ve seen your type before, Rick,” Evil-Morty mocked in an oddly flat voice, gun pointed between Rick’s eyes. “I’ve seen ‘em all.” The hole from the other apartment was smoking, small flames starting to lick up the wall and ripple across the ceiling.

“Fuck me, ball-sack,” Rick answered, hefting Morty back another step towards the window.

“Don’t you want the Council destroyed? To see the Citadel fall?” Evil-Morty asked, dangerous and dark. Rick narrowed his eyes and readjusted his hold around Morty’s waist. “She could do it. The Morties would follow her-”

“So what, they’d overthrow the Ricks and take over the place? N-noooough-o thanks. And I think you’ve read The Hunger Games a few times too many.”

Morty stumbled and Rick dragged her back to her feet as an alarm started to wail. “Rick!” she shouted again – and now she needed to shout. The whole wall was on fire, the room growing hot and filling with smoke and the roaring sound of flames. Voices in other apartments raised in fear, doors slammed, portals whooshed, and feet pounded on the floor above them; a dim hum of panic.
barely loud enough to register over the scream of the fire-alarm.

ξ-003-Morty was coughing, the smoke billowing from the flames too thick to see through. A roaring boom sounded from a few apartments over – some meth lab exploding under pressure - and the floor rattled under foot, mugs slipped off the table and shattered on the ground. Evil-Morty was hardly a shadow through the thick haze, one eye burning with a pinpoint of light Rick could barely make out through the orange-grey.

“The time of the Ricks is ending, old man,” Evil-Morty’s voice taunted through the gloom, fading back and away with ξ-003-Morty’s coughing. Rick heard the whirl of a portal and barely caught the green glow of plasma through the smoke before it blinked out - ξ-003-Morty’s hacking disappearing with it. Rick glowered.

“Rick, you tried to shoot that Morty!” Morty accused between choking gasps, shrugging off his hands when he shoved her bodily towards the window and fresh air – fresh air that was fanning the flames nearly surrounding them.

“And you left with them even though you promised you’d fucking listen to me,” he shouted over the crackling of burning plaster, realizing for the first time that the fire escape was no longer empty but crawling with ragged looking Morties and a few unhealthy looking Ricks winding their way down the ladders like ants abandoning a drowning tunnel. He latched a hand around her wrist and she fought to tug out of his grip.

“You don’t tell me anything!” she snarled, eyes scanning the yellow/blue and teal/white mass shepherding down the stairs at a clip. “There’s so many,” she gestured at the herd, one strung out Rick stumbling into her torso bent half out the window and using her head to rebalance himself on reflex. Rick tripped him with the barrel of his rifle and relished the three Morties that stepped over his back to continue on their way before he managed to drag himself to his feet and continue forward.

“There’s a whole space station of us-es and you never told me anything about it!”

Rick manhandled her away from the window, and shot a Portal at the last place not yet on fire: the floor. “And now’s not the time,” he shouted over the din.

“It’s never the time with you!” she shouted back, recovering with a deep breath of smoke that set her hacking.

“‘Whatever I want,’ right Morty,” he muttered darkly stepping towards the green swirl, rearranging his grip around her waist and preparing to slip through space. He didn’t expect her to slam her foot down hard onto his toes and yank quickly out of his loosened grasp. She scrabbled out the window, quick as a mouse, and shoved herself in front of two vacant looking Morties about to shuffle down the ladder.

“Goddamnit Morty!” He shouted, diving after her, his taller body folding in half to squeeze through the window. He caught a glimpse of her eyes peering up at him through the grating to the level below before she shoved and elbowed her way forward in the line, grunts of “Watch it!” “Hey!” and “Jeez!” chiming up in her trail.

Rick’s bigger size couldn’t cut as clean a line through the file of teenagers leading down and he lost her in the sea of brunette heads and yellow shirts milling around on the street, endless amounts of round eyes turned up to watch the apartment building burn down. One second he saw her backward-turned face, her pupils dilated full of fear when they met his, and the next she was gone, shoving herself between doppelgangers and vanishing into the mass. Rick chased her frantically, too aware of all the witnesses, all the Ricks and Morties who might notice what she was, a searing coil of fury burrowing to the pit of his stomach at the thought that she’d run from him. He would make her regret
He lost a minute pushing through the crowd to get to a mullet-Morty, his long brown hair a dead ringer for the back of Morty’s head from a distance and in the dark. The kid looked dazed when he yanked him around, and the dreamy way he said, “Rick?” like he was waking up from a bad dream rattled around unsettlingly in Rick’s ears.

After that he gave up looking with his eyes and tracked her with the coordinates blinking cheerily in the corner of his vision. Thing was, there was at least a hundred Morties and a smattering of Rick’s tossed out of the burning slum apartments and into the street. Add to that the curious neighbors and passerbys and the crowd was thick enough that even when he got within ten feet of her, she wasn’t in his line of sight. But he followed resolutely, the mass thinning out towards the edges where a handful of cop cars were parked pell-mell in the center of the road, cutting off traffic.

He was close on her tail, less than twenty feet away according to their coordinates, when the familiar voice cut through the sirens and the murmuring crowd and the roar of flames and firehoses.

“Hey, don’t – don’t touch me!” Rick’s head swung around to the sound so fast his neck cracked. At the dark entrance of an alley, a cop-Rick had Morty by the wrist, her arm dragged up high enough that she was pulled up onto her toes. Her free hand shoved at his ballistic-vested chest to no avail. The cop-Rick was looking at her like he couldn’t quite believe what he was seeing.

When the cop-Rick holstered his gun and laid a flat palm over her chest, Rick exploded with rage.

Cop-Rick wasn’t imbedded with a nano-fiber defense mesh; that was for fucking sure. His head boiled and then burst in a fraction of a second, splattering Morty and the nearby dumpster with burnt blood and viscera. She stood frozen for a moment in shock, her eyes wide as her brain struggled to catch up. Then the arm that held her up dropped, the body taking a moment longer to slump over, dragging her with the vice grip still wrapped around her wrist. Rick could tell she was about to start screaming, that wide look of horror bulging her eyes out of her head as she tried to pry her arm out of the headless body’s grasp. Rick took three long strides forward, intent on silencing her before she could give herself away, determined to grab her and portal them the fuck out of there, ready to swoop her up and cart her off, when his body seized, every muscle clenching, the metal fillings in his teeth singing in his skull with a pulse of electricity.

He smashed face-first into the cement, his arms locked and unable to catch his fall. His head reeled, disoriented, and for half a second he tried to remember how much he’d drank to wind up this plastered but that wasn’t quite right. He’d been tased. He recognized the feeling as his muscles unseized and he drawled, “Fuuuuuuuck…” involuntarily into the pavement under his bloody lips.

Small black tactical boots crunched into view and Rick rolled his eyes up to the newcomer. A chubby cop-Morty brandished a taser at him, a cruel sneer turning his face into something feral. Morty’s eyes were wide as she yanked herself away from the corpse’s fingers, hurrying towards him, her eyes big and round and zeroed onto him like he was the center of the universe. Finally, finally, she was running towards him. Too late.

“That was my partner, you sonofabitch,” Cop-Morty ground out. The last thing Rick saw was the bottom of a boot.
“Bring in Tau Three-One-Four,” a booming Rick-voice droned from the black throbbing space above Rick’s head. Someone was groaning long and loud, but the noise was oddly distant in comparison to the pounding behind his eyes.

“Guy must have a thick skull. That Cop-Morty was trying to kill him,” another Rick voice spoke much closer, accompanied by the jangling of keys and the trod of heavy boots. Rick winced and lifted his cuffed (what?) hands to feel out the damage to his face even though his nanobots were already projecting their findings to his cybernetic eye. A broken nose. A shattered eye-socket. Two massive black-eyes. Two split lips. And that wasn’t including whatever they’d already fixed up while he was unconscious. It was about then that he realized he’d been the one groaning. It took a certain amount of effort to stop, even after the nanobots started pumping endorphins into his bloodstream like it was fucking Mardi Gras.

“Oh look, he’s coming around,” another familiar voice mocked and Rick struggled to squint his eyes open past the swelling. He was in a grimy holding cell - objectively not the most uncommon place to find himself after he went on a bender and blacked out – but the sight of two doppelgangers in the white uniforms of Citadel guards didn’t line up with his expectations. He reflexively reached for his flask but it wasn’t in his pocket and he scowled, the frown making his face ache more than it already did. Jeezus he fucking hated being locked up.

The nanobots gave him a half-second warning before they re-set his nose, the resounding crack reverberating through his aching skull and jerking him into a sitting position so he could fist the hair receding from his temples. Fuck that had hurt. What the fuck had he gotten into?

Morty’s coordinates blinked disconsolately in the peripheral of his vision, not terribly far from his but farther than he would have liked them to be. And there was something about them that unsettled him. They were Citadel coordinates. He was on the Citadel. Morty was on the Citadel. Shit, Morty was on the Citadel and according to the numbers balefully glimmering just out of view, she was in the nice part of town. The neighborhood where all the rich and important Ricks called home.

Fucking shit.

Two sets of hands wrapped around his upper arms and hauled him to his feet. His moan of pain was more for the grating scrape of the nanobots artfully arranging his skull bones into place and fusing them back into the shape of his eye-socket but the two Guard-Ricks holding his arms chuckled to each other. “Wha-uuuh-t, beat up by a Morty? What kind of Rick are you?”

“Di-eeeeegh-d his tiny feet hurt your stupid face?” the other picked up on the same mocking train of thought and they half dragged/half carried Rick from the cell between them. Rick let them support his weight, too disoriented to find the energy to drag his legs underneath him and try to work out a plan at the same time.

Morty was here somewhere. According to her nanobot readouts, her heart was beating rapid-patter fast and she was a little oxygen depleted – probably a panic attack; she had a lot of those. Weirdly enough she was in the tail end of burning off a slew of chemicals that Rick guessed added up to some sort of healing serum (which was fairly ominous) but the bots weren’t picking up any noticeable damage. Some part of Rick acknowledged that it was enough that she was alive, anything
else he could fix when he got to her. If he got to her. And right then that was looking like a pretty big If.

He squinted his eyes open to watch the shiny silver flooring slide by below him. The swelling of his face was already shrinking, the space behind becoming less a throbbing center of agony and more reminiscent of the dull pulse of a mid-grade hangover. And as the pain receded, the immediacy of his situation grew more pronounced.

He was being dragged in front of the Council. He hadn’t gotten wrapped up with them since before the Citadel was anything more than a rough idea drawn on the back of a cocktail napkin. And since then he’d done a lot of stuff to rile them up. Some of it for no other purpose but to piss them off. At the time he’d been sure he would never wind up in their tyrannical claws but then Morty had to go be so unbelievably stupid. Of course it would be her fault; he’d known for a while now that his demise was going to fall on her shoulders. That was the mistake of attachments. Now he was going to die and she was probably in the hands of some seedy Morty-collector and they both were utterly fucked.

No. No. This was not how Rick was going out. And he’d be fucking damned if he was going to let Morty fall into the hands of some Rick-sociopath so long as his cybernetic heart was beating. He was a genius and a god. He could handle this.

He tilted his head, half to spit out a satisfying glob of blood onto the pristinely shined floors and half to check out his entourage. It was made up of three Rick-Guards: one on each side of him, their weapons holstered so they could drag his limp body forward, and one following behind, blaster trained on Rick’s back. The one on his right had a suspicious looking lump at his belt and Rick knew it was his portal gun the way it was obvious the mini-fridge in a hotel was filled with overpriced liquor even if no one ever opened it up and checked. It was a relief to realize it was so nearby. Now he just needed to find an opportunity to snatch it.

His wrists were cuffed in front of him, something that was never a problem on Earth or any other planet for that matter, but he could tell from the lightness of his lab coat that all his usual tricks had been confiscated. That was the trouble with Ricks: they knew themselves a little too well.

He groaned and shifted in the guard’s grip, glancing up just in time to catch the ornate gold and silver doors to the Council chamber slide open. The artificial sunlight slanting in through the windows set the time at somewhere around noon. The last time he’d seen Morty slammed into his brain like an icepick: her mouth shaping his name as she launched herself onto the back of the chubby Cop-Morty, teal fingernails clawing into his face. She’d been backlit by artificial dawn.

Hours. He’d been out for hours. That was plenty of time for something terrible to have happened to her. Rick scowled at the golden dais his little procession stopped upon and tried not to think about the healing serum still lingering in her blood and what that might mean as murmuring voices filtered past the ache in his head.

“What the fu-uuuuug-ck happened to him?” a Rick voice demanded from the raised Council seats as the guards struggled to prop Rick up. His legs were more than capable of holding him - the nanobots had fixed everything that was worse than a bruise - but it would be better to let them think he was as swollen and bloodied at his face still looked.

“What the fu-uuuuug-ck happened to him?” a Rick voice demanded from the raised Council seats as the guards struggled to prop Rick up. His legs were more than capable of holding him - the nanobots had fixed everything that was worse than a bruise - but it would be better to let them think he was as swollen and bloodied at his face still looked.

“An over-ambitious police-Morty,” the guard with a gun intoned and some of the Council tittered. “After this criminal shot his Rick.” The chuckling died immediately. Rick craned his head up to the Council and let a trail of blood slip over his lips, the red fluid pinging noisily onto the metal floor in the dead silence.

“Rickicide,” Riq IV bellowed. Rick recognized his three pointed hair poofs from their younger days
as acquaintances, though his officious (borderline gaudy) Council robes had replaced his lab coat and slacks. “Earth-Rick Tau Three-One-Four, after nearly twenty years as a wanted man skating by under the Council’s radar, what brought you to our doorstep? And to commit such a heinous crime as Rickicide right under our noses?”

Rick spit another globule of blood onto the floor. “He was fucking with my Morty,” Rick shrugged as best as he could with an arm on each of his shoulders, shuffling his feet below him staggeringly. Slowly he slid his gaze over the Council members one by one, their stoic, almost bored faces glaring down at him, but some glimmer in the back of Maximums Rickimus’ eyes drew Rick back like a magnet.

“Acc-ooooouh-ording to this Council’s own ruling, Tau-Ricks are forbidden from Morty assignment. And seeing as no Tau dimension can produce its own Morty – especially not yours Three-One-Four – you must also be here to confess to the crime of Morty-napping.”

“O-oooug-h please, as if you Rick-holes haven’t nabbed a stray Morty before.” He spoke the words to the long haired Rickimus who almost smirked at the accusation.

“And where is his stolen Morty,” Riq IV addressed the guards. Rick didn’t miss the way their fingers clenched on his bicep involuntarily.

“Disappeared at the scene of the crime,” the one holding the gun answered flatly. A lie, Rick thought to himself. The little nod Rickimus bowed in the guard’s direction told Rick more than he needed to know.

“One less thing to worry about,” Riq IV shrugged. “Show the slides!”

A dim blue light mingled with the golden sunshine filtering through the windows as images flickered holographically behind Rick.

He didn’t need to turn to know what they were looking at and he suspected the visuals were more for the Council’s benefit than his own considering the two guards holding him didn’t shuffle him around. Undoubtedly it was a series of old photos that had circulated amongst the Ricks nearly fifteen years ago. At the time they had been laughed over like a joke – all those bodies floating out in space, pathetic even in death – but now it was being used as evidence in his trial.

What fucking hypocrites. He’d been celebrated for years after he’d devoted that little corner of space to his personal revenge and encouraged other Ricks to free themselves of the same problem. It wasn’t until later, until Morty, that Ricks started singing a different tune.

And Rick didn’t need a photograph to remember, anyways, so instead he watched the blue light flicker and reflect in the stern eyes of the council members.

“For your crimes of destroying multiple valuable sources of amphetamines, for three counts of manipulating enemy galaxies into war with the Citadel - for racketeering, counterfeiting, and fraud - for unsanctioned Morty-napping, for committing Rick-icide on Citadel soil, and for inciting a mass Jerry-cide, this Council finds you-” he was interrupted when a Guard-Morty burst into the room, panting for breath. Riq IV rolled his eyes. “Morty Epsilon 39-B, we’ve talked about this-”

“It’s the Rogue!” the Guard-Morty gasped. “He’s been - the Galactic Federation arrested him! We have his Summer and Morty!”

The council started murmuring to themselves heatedly. Guard-Morty, seemingly noticing for the first time the bloody Rick balanced between two guards, gawked in surprise before he turned to glance at
the holo-projected slideshow still blinking behind Rick. Rick was half a second too late to warn him not to look.

“Oh jeez! Oh fuck – is that-” the Guard-Rick with a gun had the sense to click off the projection but Guard-Morty was already pale and shaking. “Was that – holy fuck what was that?! Where was that?”

“Rick L-32, why don’t you take Morty Epsilon 39-B and-” Riq IV made a scissor motion near his head and the only Guard-Rick with a gun in hand holstered it to steer the Guard-Morty out of the room, whispering little calming noises to the hysterical boy and curling him under his arm.

Murmurs of ‘the Rogue’ were still tittering back and forth amongst the Council and Rick let a fresh dribble of bloody drool drip down his chin. “Uh, Riq? the guard on Rick’s left interrupted.

“What? Oh right, Tau Three-One-Four. We find you guilty. Your punishment is death. Get him out of here.”

“Death?” the other guard asked. “How do you want-”

“I don’t care just get rid of him,” Riq IV snapped, waving his hand magnanimously.

“Ri-eeeuug-ght. Normally you’re a little more specific.”

“What, do you need written instructions?! Get him out of here and kill him. I don’t care how you do it. We’ve got bigger things going on than a Tau.”

Rick resented being so thoroughly dropped like a used condom but he bottled up that narcissistic rage for a later time. The two Ricks prodded him out of the council room and he made sure to keep his gait staggering enough that neither could remove their hands from him to draw their weapon.

“I always thought Tau Three-One-Four would be tougher,” the guard on Rick’s right grumbled, shifting his weight to heft Rick forward.

“Guess this one fizzled out early,” the Rick on his left answered, the trio stopping at a fork in the hallway. “Should we take our time with this one or you got a bus to catch?”

“Eh, I’m not in a hurry, what do you have in mind?”

“Acid’s always nice,” the first answered immediately and Rick cringed at the floor. Acid. Not a great way to go. He’d seen it happen too many times and it did not look fun.

“Cliché. Acid is your answer to everything. What, d-oooouh-o you have some kind of fetish?”

“What about those spores from Zylon Nine?” Rick would prefer the acid but he didn’t voice that thought aloud. “You know, the ones that swell every capillary in your body until you’re a giant blood balloon while you relive every uncomfortable moment in your life until you pop?”

Yeah, if that was going to be the winner, Rick wasn’t about to stick around long enough to find out what parts of his life didn’t qualify as ‘uncomfortable’. If they tried to expose him to any spores, he’d trigger his kill switch – something he purposely didn’t think about too often to avoid the temptation but he’d installed it for exactly this scenario. After a particularly drawn out torture session with an overambitious gromflomite, Rick had installed a manual shut down for his cybernetic heart; a quick, relatively painless way to die under his own conditions. Relative to prolonged physical and existential torture at least.
“That’s not bad,” the guard on his left admitted, “but blood gets everywhere and I’m sick of cleaning the ceiling.”

“Fu-uuuugh-ck it, I’m hungry,” the one on Rick’s right grumbled, holding his stomach. “Should we just get this over with and grab a burrito?”

“Yeah I could eat. How bout we throw him out the airlock. For a bit of ironic justice, you know?” The guard waggled his eyebrow at his unimpressed companion. As far as the options went, Rick could live – well, die – with that one, but he was growing more confident these two weren’t going to be the hardest Ricks to take out.

“What, now you think you’re Alanis Morisette?” the other Rick snarked back. His grip on Rick loosened as he turned to argue with his companion.

“You fucking idiot, nothing she lists in that song is ironic!” the first bit out between clenched teeth.

Rick rolled his eyes between them and bent his neck until it cracked.

“That’s the irony,” the second rebutted heatedly. “Jeezus you’re dumb as a fucking Morty.”

And now looked like his chance.

With one hard kick the guard on Rick’s right went slamming into the wall. With a tight elbow to the gut, the other guard gasped, Rick making quick work of snatching the pistol from the guard’s hip holster. The unarmed guard lunged for him but Rick rolled out of the way, twisting up onto his knee to blast a laser through his attacker’s forehead. One down.

Rick turned, barely in time to catch the other guard’s gunshot in the middle of his cuffs instead of his stomach, freeing his hands, before shooting the blaster out of the guard’s grip.

“Whoa whoa whoa!” the guard-Rick shouted, his hands raising up complacently.

“What happened to my Morty,” Rick growled, his hands steady where they held the gun to the guard’s head. The smoldering remains of the cuffs still circled his wrists like bracelets.

“The girl? We sold her. To Maximums Rickimus.” Rick frowned. “I can take you there-” Rick cut him off with a laser blast to the head.

“Ca-auuuuh-llled it,” Rick muttered, stretching his back properly for the first time since he’d been knocked out and feeling his spine realign in two places.

Good news: he was a free man again. Bad news: Morty was in the gnarled, far-reaching hands of a Council member. Things weren’t ideal but hey, at least he wasn’t being blasted out of an airlock into space. Small victories, right?

Now what did he know about Maximums Rickimus? He knew the guy was a Morty collector. Before Rick had made quite sure that there weren’t any other Morticias flouncing around, the long-haired Council member liked to brag he had one in his menagerie. Now it seemed he did. And the other rumors; that his Morties never left his mansion except in chains, that he was a backdoor customer at a variety of shifty Morty-clubs, and that he was particularly labeled as a sadist (amongst a group of men who all self-identified as such), didn’t bode particularly well for Morty.

Rick tucked the still hot blaster into the back hem of his pants and scowled.

He padded over to the fallen guard and flipped open the man’s jacket to reveal his missing portal
gun. Rick felt the dried blood on his cheeks and chin stretch as he grinned. For good measure he grabbed the other guard’s gun from under his dead weight and felt around the man’s coat hoping to find more of his confiscated devices. All he found was a multi-tool barely more useful than a swiss army knife, his phone, and (of all things) his memory wiper. He pocketed them and tried to count himself lucky he wasn’t completely empty handed. It was easier than usual because, honestly, he hadn’t really pictured living to that point.

Thank fucking Christ for the rogue. Whatever he was up to, he couldn’t have timed it more perfectly. Rick made a mental note to buy the guy a drink if he ever ran into his sorry ass. Then again, with the Council on his ass, his survival was anyone’s bet.

He spun the dial to Morty’s coordinates (which hadn’t moved a fucking foot since he’d woken up in that cell) and shot a spiral of green at the wall, his cybernetic heart working hard to keep a steady pace. When he tried to walk through it however, his knee painfully banged into a solid wall. He pressed his hand against the portal and where normally his hand slipped through a thin membrane of cold particles, now it rested flat against a solid wall.

A portal blocker. Rick scowled. Of course as a member of the council it was smart to block strange portals from his own home. Rick had done the same thing just the day before and he bet he had a lot less enemies. But goddamnit, now wasn’t the time for minor inconveniences.

He reprogramed his portal gun and tried again, this time stepping through the green swirl out onto a carefully manicured lawn. Rick glared up at the gleaming white estate and snorted, the noise loud and derisive in the bright airy peace of Maximums Rickimus’s lawn.

The extravagant mansion was built to imitate the Pantheon. Romanesque columns glittered officiously in the sunlight, long white pillars supporting a great steepled roof, and as Rick approached at a jog, he had to tilt his head back to take it all in. Rich Ricks were ridiculous. The whole thing was gaudy and tasteless and Rick wanted one just like it but better.

He was interrupted from his gawking when a shout of, “Halt, trespasser!” cracked through the air, an armed Rick shouting from the steps. But Rick was quicker on the draw and the Security-Rick dropped to the ground with a hole where his eye used to be. The other sentinel wisely shoot Rick in the arm before announcing his location by yelling and Rick cursed vehemently while he ducked behind a pillar. Knowing he was at the disadvantage, he shot blindly around the column, miraculously landing a lucky hit into the sentinel’s gut. Rick put another in his head for good measure.

Rick paused a moment and listened carefully for the sound of more attackers but the grounds were quiet and Rick wasn’t going to stand around and wait for any potential threats to regroup. He dashed up the last of the stone steps and shoulder open the heavy door, grimacing as he spared a glance at his bleeding bicep. It stung like a bitch but he’d live.

If Rick had thought the exterior of the mansion was ostentatious, the interior was absurd. The heavy white door swung in to reveal a dark palace of polished white marble and gold, every surface sparkling back at him like an army of meeseeks had just done the polishing. Huge gilded mirrors flanked the doorway and low lit wall sconces spanned the length of the room, their lights flickering like candles in the dim foyer. Rick squinted at the opulence, the sunlight pouring in around his shadow rendering the gold veined marble blinding. He gripped his gun tightly in hand as he half-waited for some Butler-Rick to show up and start trying to blast his head off. The door swung weightily closed behind him with an echoing thump but no footsteps clacked on the marble except his own.

With another sweep of the room, his eyes landed on the only other occupant, so small and low to the
floor Rick had overlooked him at first as an extension of the chaise lounge he was kneeling next to.

A Morty. A boy Morty. A blind Morty Rick realized abruptly when he paced forward and caught sight of the boy’s fogged irises and empty gaze.

“Welcome home, Maximums Rickimus,” the boy spoke softly, his vacant eyes downturned to the gold platter he held before him. He was clearly shirtless but from Rick’s angle he couldn’t be sure he wasn’t completely naked, the tray large enough to shield his lower body. Against his better judgement, Rick leaned over far enough to sweep his eyes down. He sighed when he did, noticing the golden ropes that tied the Morty’s ankles to his thighs, trapping him in a kneeling position on the cold stone floor. The harder he looked, the more Rick believed the boy was nude, and he grit his teeth when he turned his attention away.

Looked like Rick wasn’t the only one with a specific set of tastes. But what did that mean for Morticia? Rick almost dreaded to find out except for the traitorous spark of heat that coiled tightly in his gut proving yet again that in the journey of life, there were always new personal lows to discover.

“Yeah,” Rick muttered roughly, glaring at the various doors that led off from the foyer and trying to ignore the twinge of pity that bubbled in his gut when the boy hid a wince. But this kid wasn’t his problem. Morty was. And of all those fucking doors, which one led to her? “Where’s the girl?” he asked, eyes focused on the top of Blind-Morty’s bent head. That part of him, at least, was safe to look at. Nothing fucked up to feel about his sad little bent head.

“She’s been prepared, as you specified,” the boy answered, shifting the tray up a little higher. “And the item you requested has been made.” Rick picked up a small magnetic key and the collection of gold plated straps presented to him, huffing a breath out his nose. Shit, Maximums Rickimus really got his number – completely accidentally obviously. He pocketed the items and silently thanked a non-existent god that he had beaten the man home.

“Which-” Rick was cut short when the entire room dropped in a free fall ten feet through thin air. Furniture skidded while the tall gilded mirrors that flanked the entrance shattered to the ground in jagged pieces. Rick dropped to a knee and braced himself against the chaise, pushing it away from Blind-Morty when it threatened to slam into him, the boy completely unaware of the danger. Chunks of the ceiling rained down, a piece slamming hard into the ground less than a foot away from Rick’s foot and he curled away from the explosion of plaster.

The tray in Blind-Morty’s hands went flying and Rick saw why he hadn’t tried to brace himself: his wrists were tied tightly together and connected to a band of golden rope circling his waist. And there was something between his legs – a series of gold loops twined around the flaccid length of his penis. A chastity cage. Apparently Rickimus liked his Morties in chastity. Rick begrudgingly could see the appeal but the beaten and curled-in look of Blind-Morty made the picture a lot less enticing than the image Rick’s fantasies produced.

Rick forced himself not to stare and dragged his attention back to the trembling ground as the pitching and rolling died down. “What the fuck was that?” Rick asked, eyes flashing to Blind-Morty though his foggy pupils stayed plastered to the floor to the left of Rick’s knee. The kid was breathing hard, clearly scared but trying to hide it, and Rick caught himself curving a steadying hand around the boy’s shoulder before he scrambled to the door.

Had someone followed him and decided to knock the whole house down over his head? Was this some fucking booby trap/self-destruct sequence he’d triggered by walking across the threshold? He yanked open the door fully prepared to face a firing squad, his gun gripped tight in his hand with his finger on the trigger. But there was no battalion of Guard-Rick’s waiting for him on the other side.
Rick’s mouth fell open as he padded dumbly down the first three steps of the wide staircase, his brain struggling to make sense of what he was seeing. Night had fallen upon the Citadel. The artificial daylight had vanished and the black stretch of space surrounding the glass dome of the Citadel was littered with outposts and ships glittering with Federation insignia.

The Citadel had been teleported to the middle of a Federation prison; he could see the huge black spire piercing city center.

When the sound of distant gunshots and shouting jerked past his momentary shock, Rick jumped back into action. A house like this – huge and gaudy and rich – was sure to attract attention sooner rather than later. Between the escaped convicts (their orange jumpsuits little sparks against the white buildings and streets) and the unique predilection for looting that most Ricks shared, Rick estimated he had less than a handful of minutes to get in and out with Morty before company arrived. Rick slammed the door closed behind him and barricaded it the best he could with the gilded frame from a demolished mirror.

The bound Morty was trembling where he kneeled and Rick scrambled to his side. “Where’s the girl?!” he demanded, holding the kid by the shoulders. He quaked under his palms.

“What’s – what’s happening? You’re not Maximums Rickimus, are you?” he asked shakily.

Rick rolled his eyes. “No, I’m not. Now tell me where they put her.”

“In – in the master suite. Oh god, oh jeez, what’s happening? Am I gonna die - are you gonna kill me?”

Rick choked on his inhale, whipping out his stolen multi-tool and flipping open a sharp glinting knife. “What the fuck, no!” Rick slashed angrily at the rope binding the boy’s legs. “But a lot of people with guns are on their way. You’ve got to take me to Morty – to girl-Morty.” Blind-Morty cringed when he felt the cold blade against his legs but stopped crying once Rick had sliced through enough of the rope to yank the coils away. “Come on,” Rick demanded, dragging the boy to his feet. A shudder rippled through the small shoulders and Rick glanced down. An anatomically correct dildo was embedded into the floor – golden and very recognizable to Rick. Its shiny surface was still slick from Blind-Morty’s ass.

The boy had been forced to sit on that thing – on that replica of Rickimus’ dick - for who knows how long and wait for that asshole’s return like a tortured house pet. And Rick had thought he was fucked up. He swallowed that thought when he realized Morty – his Morty – was still somewhere in this hell-mansion and had apparently been ‘prepared’ to Rickimus’ specifications. What the fuck would that entail? “Which door?” he grated out between his teeth, turning Blind-Morty towards the many options and giving him a little shove.

“To – to the master suite?” Blind-Morty stuttered looking hopelessly torn. Rick rubbed at his face and stifled a shout before sliding the knife between the boy’s skin and the ropes still wrapped around his waist, sawing him loose and freeing his hands. Rick watched the wave of insecurity – followed quickly by a small gleam of hope – wash over his almost-familiar features before he steadied himself. “This way,” Blind-Morty half whispered and stumbled off in the direction of the furthest doorway, trailing his hand along the wall and shooting a grateful little pout over his shoulder when Rick steadied him on reflex when he tripped over debris.

For being blind, completely naked, and a Morty, Rick was surprised by the ease with which the kid navigated the many gilded rooms. He walked quickly and with purpose, a hand sliding along the wall or reaching out for furniture when the rooms opened up into high-ceilinged, wide-spanning spaces. All the rooms were empty and dark – a power-outage probably, there was a fucking prison
sticking out of city center - but he didn’t dwell on it long as he watched his coordinates tick closer to Morty’s, digit by digit.

When the clacking of his shoes and the soft pads of Blind-Morty’s bare feet started to grate of his nerves, Rick asked, “What sort of defenses do you have here? Should I be expecting more Security-Ricks to spring up in one of these rooms?”

Blind-Morty shook his head. “The Ricks stay outside.” Rick caught him by the arm before he stepped in a pile of broken porcelain that used to be a vase and steered him around it. “We tend to the manor and to Maximums Rickimus’ needs.”

Rick, sick of having to stare at Blind-Morty’s scrawny bare ass ripped a diaphanous white curtain off its rod as he passed a window, staring grimly through the glass at the scene unfurling outside the mansion. Past the wide green lawn and iron gates of Rickimus’ estate, Ricks and Morties of every variety fought off Federation gromflomites and orange jump-suited prisoners with whatever weapon they had at their disposal. Rick absent-mindedly draped the fabric over Blind-Morty’s shoulders and urged, “Can we speed this up a bit?”

Blind-Morty, a look on his face like he’d never been handled so kindly, knotted the fabric over his shoulder and around his waist like a toga. “Yea – yeah, we’re almost there,” he said, hurrying along. His hands groped for the huge gold-ring doorknobs on a set of double doors and Rick grabbed the metal and pulled the heavy doors open.

“What’s happening out there-” a Morty voice spoke as soon as the doors swung in but cut off abruptly as Rick came into sight.

Rick wasn’t sure what he’d been expecting; maybe another huge empty lounge or something like the densely packed library they’d hurried through a few rooms earlier, but instead he came face to face with a Morty-dense harem, the aesthetic practically ripped from the pages of a bad romance novel.

The room was the same white marble the rest of the mansion favored, tall pillars stretching to the ceiling between stacks of cushions and settees. In the middle of the room, the floor dipped down into a pool of water, steam rising off the surface and scenting the room with something spicy and exotic. Draping, gauzy white curtains stirred with the force of Rick throwing open the doors and behind them, glinting from around pillars and over the backs of couches peered wide, frightened Morty-eyes.

At least ten Morties, Rick quickly tallied in a sweep of the room. All similarly curving into themselves and staring fearfully at Rick and the pistol in his hands like he was the grim reaper.

Rick reluctantly pocketed his weapon and showed them his empty palms, a little too aware of the crusted blood covering his face. “I’m not here for any of you,” he warned, quickly cataloguing anything they might use as a weapon and their likelihood of success. Their odds weren’t good: they looked even weaker than his Morty and he could take her on easily enough - and they struck him as more likely to start crying than to put up a fight - but he’d seen Morticia snap on enough occasions to know it was foolish to doubt the full power of a terrified Morty, let alone ten.

“This way,” Blind-Morty asserted, completely ignorant of the tension in the room as he staggered around cushions and overturned bowls of fruit.

“What is this room, the sheik’s palace?” Rick asked sarcastically, following Blind-Morty and turning as he walked, trying to keep from exposing his back to the anxiously vibrating teenagers lest they get any ideas. Rick zeroed in on a Merman-Morty poised at the edge of the steaming pool, gold cuffs circling his wrists and neck. At Rick’s stare, he slithered into the water until only his bulbous eyes
peered curiously over the ledge.

“This is where we are kept,” Blind-Morty answered Rick’s attempt at levity obtusely, bumping hard into an ornately carved dresser that had toppled in front of the door he’d been aiming for. When Rick steadied the boy again, he felt the heat of many stares on the back of his head and glanced behind him to the inquisitive boys slowly slinking out from their hiding places to gape at him.

There were Morties Rick had never heard of before: a long haired Morty with a unicorn horn sticking out of his forehead, a Morty whose skin flickered with strange electric blue patterns when he crossed his arms to hug his own elbows, and one that had tentacles for hands. Every single one of them was naked (though they seemed unembarrassed by the fact) and Rick didn’t miss the gold that glimmered between all of their legs and around many of their throats. Yup, chastity seemed to be Maximums Rickimus' thing. Then again, if all Morties displayed the same willingness to get each other off as his Morty, Rick could kind of see why Rickimus might try to keep the kids from beating each other off in an endless loop. Otherwise the pretty harem room would be ruined by a fucking cascade of jizz. The contraption burning a hole in Rick’s pocket made much more sense and Rick stifled the jealous rage when he thought about his Morty joining this strange menagerie of teenagers.

“She’s in here,” Blind-Morty grunted, jerking Rick from his thoughts.

Rick cast one last glance at the petrified Morties and their glassy eyed stares before he turned to find Blind-Morty struggling to push the dresser away from his path, his skinny arms trembling with effort. Rick rolled his eyes and braced his hip against the edge, using his legs to shove the heavy cabinet away. Things clattered noisily out of its way and Rick frowned, squinting through the dim flickering light of the wall sconces to make out a wide variety of golden sex toys (jeezus Rickimus had a fucking color theme going); butt plugs, cock rings, dildos, vibrators, straps, cuffs, ropes and gags. Rick stilled and let the vicious blackness that never entirely stopped swirling around in the pit of his stomach move his hand to collect a few items of interest and pocket them absent-mindedly. Hey, why should he let them go to waste?

When the door was unbarred, Blind-Morty side-stepped, bowing his head and pressing himself into the wall. Rick glanced behind him to find the boy-Morties had crept closer, faces open with curiosity in a way that made Rick desperate for his own Morty and he swung the door open with a vice clenched around his heart.

In the dim lighting filtering through the windows – the city center licking in flames and the low red glow of the Federation prison – the pale, white stretch of Morty’s bare skin glowed warmly in the flickering orange light.

Gold rope wound around her torso, above and below her breasts, her arms pulled behind her back, the position jutting her chest out prominently. Her legs were spread wide and tied to heavy rings embedded in the floor. A loop of rope hanging from the ceiling wrapped around her neck and pulled her to her toes and even from across the room, Rick could hear her struggling breaths. Her eyes were closed tightly, tears leaking a steady stream down her cheeks as she subtly shifted her weight and the rope around her neck creaked with the strain.

Rage flooded Rick hot and fast as he scrambled towards her, her eyes snapping open in alarm at his heavy footfalls. Watching her expression shift from terror to recognition, then to teary-eyed relief alleviated some of his anger, and he slid to his knees, the multi-tool knife slashing at the bindings on her ankles.

“Rick-!” she choked out, the chokehold straining her voice as a few of her tears dripped off her up-tilted chin and landed on the back of his head. “Rick...”
“I got you buddy, don’t worry,” he murmured nonsensically snapping the final cord on one ankle and nudging it over to better support her weight. “I’m here, Grandpa’s here.” With her other ankle free, she could more easily alleviate the pull on her throat and she coughed, her eyes bright and locked on his face like he was the fucking sun. He stood, wrapping an arm around her and lifting her to loosen the pull of the noose. “Okay, almost there.” He fumbled out his gun and pressed the barrel against the last rope holding her, nimbly pulling her away from the falling plaster from the hole that opened up in the ceiling when he pulled the trigger.

With a few frantic pulls, his quick fingers had found enough slack to unwind the rope from Morty’s neck and she was free, slouching her weight heavily into Rick’s chest and pressing her teary face into the nook of his shoulder as she gasped for breath. He gave into the momentary urge to curl around her protectively, the tight vice of worry that had been knotting up his intestines unwound itself as he breathed in the smell of her hair; a strange spiciness overlaying the familiar smell of her sweat and skin.

“I thought you were dead, for sure,” Morty sobbed into his shoulder and Rick pet at her hair flabbergasted, something long dormant flopping around in his stomach. It had been a while since someone would care – really care – if he lived or died. And why was she worrying about him when she’d been strung up for who-knows how long? The thought made him uncomfortable so he ignored the sensation in favor of mentally cursing himself – for endangering her and for caring if he endangered her. He wasn’t sure which one pissed him off more at the moment.

“No-ooough-t today, baby,” he answered, his voice robotically cocky, but the genuine (if still slightly distraught) laugh that Morty smothered into his sweater did wonders for improving his mood and he felt his lips impractically tilt up into something like a smile.

“Now quick, untie me Rick!” Morty demanded, turning to better display her bindings. Her arms were crossed and pulled up behind her back, forearms parallel to the floor.

He dug into his pocket for the multi-tool but he was broken from his plan when an explosion cracked the relative silence, the walls trembling and the unlit wall sconces clattering metallically against the walls. A puff of plaster dust drifted in a plume from the ceiling and the ground shook. Rick steadied Morty with one hand when she struggled to stand as the marble floor cracked and heaved, his other tightening his hold on the gun.

A chorus of anxious tittering alerted Rick that he had an audience and he spun, lifting the blaster in reflex, but it was only the boy-Morties from the harem, gathered at the door and staring at the way he’d automatically turned to shield Morty with a sort of lingering hunger. Rick lowered his weapon as the sounds of shouting and destruction grew closer, unmistakably indoors. The fight had made its way into the mansion and now that he had his Morty, Rick couldn’t think of a reason to stay. “Time for that later,” he assured her, wrapping his fingers around her upper arm like a vice. “Now we’ve got to get out of here,” he muttered to Morty while he dug his portal gun out of his pocket.

“That won’t - portals won’t work in here,” the tentacle-armed Morty piped up.

“Fucking portal blocker,” Rick swore fiercely and the Morty that had spoken up cringed back like he expected to be admonished for the remark. “Fine, we’ll go outside.” He changed the setting on his pistol and fired a thick laser bolt at the wall, slicing an oval out of the plaster and stone that fell out to reveal the world on fire. A few dead Ricks littered the grass and Rick dragged Morty towards the way out with the grip on her crossed and bound arms.

Rick shot a portal the second they were out into the smokey, ozone-tanged air but Morty planted her feet hard in the grass and rubble, turning her head to peer around Rick’s arms back to the huddled mass of shivering Morties. “What about them?” she asked.
“Morty, no,” Rick glared down at her but Morty’s eyes pleaded for her, big and burning with the reflected light of a nearby skyscraper on fire.

Her gaze darted over his face, and Rick would have razed the whole mansion to know what she saw written there when she quietly pouted, “Rick, please.” Her arms tensed against the ropes and Rick scowled, vindictively deciding to delay untying her as long as possible; punishment for making his life so much harder than it had to be.

Rick groaned and swiped a hand down his mouth. “Fine. Fuck. But you owe me.” He turned the dial on his portal gun and re-shot a green spiral into space. “Get over here quick before I change my mind,” he demanded and the crowd of naked boy-Morties crept closer. “Either you go through right now or you stay and get killed. Choice is yours but we will leave you behind.”

The Morties murmured to themselves a bit before a loud clang sounded in the room adjacent to the harem and one by one they started sprinting towards the portal.

Another portal blossomed on the lawn, the sight not uncommon at all amongst the chaos of a space station of Ricks defending themselves from alien invaders, but the figure that stepped out from it chilled Rick to the bone. That vicious surgical aggression bubbled up from the dark pit Rick buried it in, his fingers tingling with anticipation. When the last three Morties disappeared into the spiral (two supporting the Merman-Morty between them, his dim blue tail dragging across the grass), he turned to Morticia.

“You stay exactly where that portal puts you,” Rick commanded, his attention locked on the boy over Morty’s shoulder as the boy’s dead-eyes caught sight of them and sprinting towards them.

“Rick, what.” Morty tried to turn to see what Rick was glaring at but he caught her by the shoulders and refocused on her.

“I’ll be right behind you,” he promised harshly before he shoved Morty through the gateway and it blinked out of existence, just in time for Evil-Morty to skid to a halt in the space it used to occupy.

The boy was covered in soot and blood, the nanofiber defense mesh stuttering in and out of sight as it glitched, huge portions of it visibly corroded. Rick smirked, leveled his gun level with Evil-Morty’s chest and fired. The blast bounced off his damaged mesh, a few particles shriveling under the heat of the laser, but not enough to break through to his skin. Evil-Morty quirked an eyebrow. “Where did you send her?” he asked, his voice that flat, eerie hum that Rick found so disconcerting.

“Somewhere she’s safe,” Rick answered darkly, reluctantly lowering his useless weapon. The defense mesh would protect the boy from physical harm but luckily the kid didn’t appear to be armed except for his portal gun.

“Where’s your friend?” Rick pointedly nodded at the empty space beside Evil-Morty. “Where’s your friend?” ξ-003-Morty was one of many loose ends on Rick’s list, and sure the world was literally on fire but Rick needed to clean up shop before he and Morty could go back to U-694 worry-free. And even if he didn’t particularly like the idea of hunting down that kid, he’d do it if it meant Morty would never wind up dragged back to the Citadel again. Once had been more than enough for the both of them.

The boy-Morty glanced down at the bloody stain painting his shirt red and flicked off a chunk of viscera. “He didn’t make it.” Rick grimaced at the emotionless tone. Evil-Morty shrugged. “The Council is dead too.”
Rick smiled, a bark of laughter bubbling out of him unbidden. That was convenient. Rick would be marked as dead in the Citadel files and one of the last remaining people who knew about Morty had been struck off the list for him. “Aren’t you lucky? You got what you wanted without doing any of the dirty work.”

“The dirty work has only just begun.”

“I thought you wanted the Citadel to fall.” Rick glanced at the surrounding destruction. The scattered Ricks and Morties, the burning buildings, the prison spire still slicing through city center. “Not much work left for you.”

“They’ll rebuild it. And the Council were only figure-heads. There’s plenty more Ricks around who’d love to pull the strings.”

“So what, you’d rather be the puppeteer?” Rick asked, pocketing his gun and feeling for the only other trick he had up his sleeve.

Evil-Morty smirked, an empty, terrifying facsimile of Morty’s self-deprecating smile. “I’d rather be the puppet master.” The boy pulled a knife from the waistband of his jeans, the edge already dark with blood. “Hand over your portal gun.” Rick rolled his eyes and glared down his nose at the shorter boy. “I know her dimension and I’ll find you wherever you go, so just make this easy for yourself. Go find some other Morty to abuse.”

Rick rankled at the word. “I’m partial to the one I’ve already got.” Rick wasted half a second on a useless plea that his untested invention would work as expected and pointed the double-barreled ray gun into Evil-Morty’s eyes. There was a burst of light and the electric buzz of a flash-bulb charging, a wave of heat radiating off the two barrels and warming Rick’s hand. He lowered the memory-wiper slowly, glaring into the lax face of Evil-Morty, scientific mind buzzing to discern whether it had worked. Rick tilted the gun up to see the previously empty cartridge was filled with a red viscous fluid.


*Genius and a god, motherfucker.*

“The Citadel has been transported into Federation space. The Council is dead. Now do me a favor and stay out of my fucking hair.” Rick took three steps back and watched the bewildered boy in front of him scratch his head and glance around before Rick shot a portal under his own feet and landed heavily on metal grating with a noisy clang.

Chapter End Notes

Now you know where they fit it on the shows timeline. And whoops, shit got fucked up, stay tuned for more... "\(\_\ (\_\ )/\_\/"
Chapter Nine

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rick’s ankles protested the hard landing but his grousing was cut short by an excited cry.

“Rick!”

A gagg[e of wide-eyed, shivering Morties were gaping at him with something close to fear but Rick only had eyes for one; Morticia, the anxiety clouding her face melting into relief. A Rabbit-Morty clung to one of her shoulders, the longhaired Unicorn-Morty huddled closely on her other side, but inexplicably they hadn’t untied her arms. Then again, considering the loose ropes still circling Blind-Morty’s wrists, Rick suspected they were used to staying in whatever state a Rick specified.

Morty tried to shoulder her way forward but the gaggle of boys held her back, closing ranks around her protectively. “Wha – jeez it’s fine, he’s my Rick,” she asserted but the Rabbit-Morty tucked himself against her side, burying his face into her hair. She rolled her eyes, but rubbed her chin reassuringly along the top of his furry head.

Rick couldn’t exactly fault them for being skittish. The empty cargo hold he’d portaled them to didn’t exactly scream warmth; the floors were metal grating, the walls cold steel panels, and the two doors in and out were locked to everyone but Rick. But it was the first place he’d thought of – someplace no one on the Citadel would know the coordinates to, someplace no one would think to go but him.

His eyes darted down to the gold chastity cages glittering between the legs of the Morties and he frowned, fingering the hexagonal edge of the magnetic key still rattling around in his pocket.

The Morties were mashed together against one of the bay doors like frightened chickens locked in a pen with a fox and Rick wasn’t really good at dealing with scared kids. The best he could do was figure out the next place to send them and put them on their way but when his eyes landed on Blind-Morty, his face vulnerable and tilted towards Rick with something less than fear, Rick pulled the key from his pocket. “This look familiar to anyone?” he asked, holding the small device up.

The Morties exchanged anxious looks and someone farted before one of them nodded, his skin pulsing a vibrant green design out from his tilted jaw. Rick threw the key to him and he caught it after bouncing it between his hands twice and nearly dropping it to the grated floor. “Time to experience some sexual freedom,” Rick intoned trying to shoot them something like a reassuring smile. When the Morty stared back at him blankly, blinking dully and holding the key like it might burn him, Rick rolled his eyes and groaned. “Unlock yourself. Then help the others.”

It seemed Maximus Rickimus’ Morties were used to following a Rick’s orders because the boy didn’t pause as he brought the device to the base of his cock cage and pressed it to a matching hexagon. As Rick had assumed, it was some sort of electronic key. The gold loops sprang open, the colorful-Morty breathing out a shaky sigh as the heavy device clanged against the metal floor, electric yellow swirls of joy shooting from the base of his flaccid dick and up the planes of his stomach. He shot Rick one last questioning look, his cheeks fluttering with pink curls, but at Rick’s nod, he turned to free the next Morty.

Rick pulled out his phone and started thumbing through his contacts. “What happened to Maximums Rickimus,” Blind-Morty spoke up bravely, two of his doppelgangers pulling him back and shushing him fearfully when Rick turned his attention back to the boys. Another heavy clang told Rick he was
that much closer to finishing his one good deed. The way Morty – *his Morty* - was watching him with *something* glittering in the back of her eyes made Rick feel woefully under experienced at nurturing a bunch of kids with all sorts of PTSD, but that spark inexplicably made him want to try.

Rick grimaced and only barely held back the ‘dead as a doornail’ that wanted to come flying out his mouth. “He didn’t make it,” he deadpanned instead, unable to keep a small speck of mirth from his tone. What surprised him was the way the downtrodden and clearly mistreated Morties wore a spectrum of grief on their dumb, pale faces. Morties really had it hard for Ricks, even monster-Ricks that locked them into bondage apparently. Rick gaze landed back on Morticia, he eyes fierce and searing like a brand while another clang disturbing the otherwise tense silence.

Rick ignored the heat her stare had ignited in his belly and continued scrolling through his phone. Narrowing it down to Ricks who *weren’t* complete terrors cut the list down to almost nothing and the answer jutted out at him almost instantly. There was maybe one Rick in the known galaxy that Rick could trust completely to find a pack of exotic Morties safe homes; one that would ask no questions and complete the task for free – his self-professed ‘payment’ the validation of some idiot ideology about ‘*doing the right thing*’ or something equally useless to Rick τ-314.

Rick J19 Zeta 7. *Doofus Rick*. Rick ruminated it was a good thing he *hadn’t* deleted his number after he found out the guy ate poop.

He sent off a rapid-fire text and mumbled, “Morty, come here,” as he rummaged around in his pockets. Half the cowering Morties shuffled forward and Rick rolled his eyes, pacing over to a tool supply he’d hidden behind a panel. He started twisting at the settings of his memory wiper with a screwdriver. “*My Morty. Girl-Morty. Come here.*”

It seemed the Morties couldn’t resist an order from a Rick because their previously restrictive hands fell away almost immediately and Morty wobbled through the throng, a little unbalanced with her arms still bound behind her. He only had one cartridge for the memory gun and it was already full of Evil-Morty’s memories of the last three days but he didn’t have much desire to archive those anyways. He pried off the metal cap and poured the red fluid onto the ground, the liquid slipping between the grates and disappearing into the depths of the hangar. Rick scowled, belatedly wondering whether memory goo was corrosive, but no sirens started blaring so he figured he was in the clear. He slipped the empty vial back into its slot and finished making the last few adjustments to his invention by the time Morty staggered over to him.

> “W-w-what’s that, Rick?” she asked, squinting at the unfamiliar device and shivering. Without the heat of a pack of Morties, the artificial atmosphere *was* pretty chilly, especially to a naked girl with hardly an ounce of body fat on her bones.

Rick shot her a flat look. “Come here,” he commanded while he held open his lab coat and let her tuck herself into it at his side, folding the excess fabric around her back. She melted into his body heat even though, as usual, *she* was the one who felt like a furnace.

Compulsively he pressed a kiss to her forehead, the action more reflex than choice, but he still relished the little sigh she exhaled through her nose, the breath of it warming his skin through his sweater. A unanimous little “*Oooohh,*” breathed out of the group of boys nearly as one and a fascinated, envious gape painted their faces (except for Blind-Morty who felt the shift in the mood and frowned somewhere to Rick’s left).

The colorful-Morty shouldered his way to the front of the group, the electronic key pinched between his fingers. “You got ‘em all?” Rick asked him and he nodded. “Toss it back.” The Morty’s throw was off mark by two feet but Rick leaned forward and caught it all the same.
“Okay, let’s see if this’ll work,” Rick murmured, pulling his Morty against his chest and shielding her eyes against his sweater. He closed his own and turned his head down to nestle in her strangely scented hair before he lifted the memory wiper at the crowd of Morties and pulled the trigger.

Even with his eyes closed he saw the flash light up the hangar and instinctually he curved him and Morty away from the burst of white. When an electric charge sounded from the memory wiper, the hot device overloaded in his hands, the capsule bursting and spewing memory goo in a shocking spurt while Rick dropped the gun like a hot potato. When the light behind his closed eyes cleared, he lifted his head and reassured himself of his own memories.

He knew who Morty was. Who *his* Morty was. She liked strawberry jelly on her toast and syrup on her bacon. She pronounce over-arching ‘over-ARKing.’ That fathomless sparkle of trust she was squinting up at him with was the reason he’d kept her around. And she was naked and bound in his arms because she’d tried to run away from him.

He gently pushed her behind him, shielding her from the confused eye-rubbing the naked boy-Morties were frowning around the hangar with. Before one of them could pull himself together enough to start asking questions, Rick’s phone buzzed with coordinates and he dialed his portal gun to the numbers.

“Okay, let’s get you all a new home,” Rick said authoritatively and whatever programming Maximums Rickimus had instilled in his harem boys, they all snapped to attention. “I’m sending you to a guy – a good guy. He’ll take care of you.” Rick shot a portal to the left of the group and watched them all shift nervously from foot to foot. One of them toed at the golden chastity cage lying at his feet before grooping between his legs, a look of shock and wonder widening his eyes. “Okay, come on, through the portal,” Rick muttered a little impatiently, and it was the colorful-Morty pulsing with jagged red swirls that led the way, sending one last confused glance at Rick before disappearing into the portal. The other’s followed sedately and Rick distractedly wondered if he’d set the memory wiper too high and they’d come out of it a little brain damaged.

He shrugged the thought away. If they were brain damaged, they’d get along even better with Doofus Rick.

Once the last Morty disappeared into the portal and the gateway irised closed, Rick turned to his own. “What did that thing do?” she asked him a little skeptically, her brow furrowed in distrust as she studied the broken pieces littering the metal floor.

“They’re *fine*, don’t worry about it,” Rick grumbled, kicking at the unsalvageable remains and wiping the memory-goo coating his hand off on his lab coat. “You don’t have to get your panties all up in a bunch – O-ooouuh-h wait, you aren’t wearing any.”

Morty growled and kicked his shin with her bare toes, undoubtedly doing more damage to her own foot that she did to Rick’s leg.

“You don’t – come on Rick don’t be such a jerk,” she pouted. “I was real happy to see you but now I’m not so sure.”

“You want me to take you back?” Rick drolled, pulling out his portal gun dramatically and watching Morty’s shoulders heave as she squirmed in her bondage. The rope-work was impressive – shibari by the look of it - complicated, intricate and tight. A few passes of rope wrapped across her torso above her straining breasts and a few underneath, the loops emphasizing her small her chest and trapping her upper arms to her sides. He turned her to better watch the way her hands twisted uselessly against the cords. The teal nail polish had been taken off.
With his hands on her shoulders, she stopped struggling. “No,” she answered emphatically, turning to shoot him with big doe-eyes over her shoulder. “Rick,” she said a little hoarsely, “jeez Rick I thought – that cop really kicked your head in Rick…” her eyes started to tear up again, wide and trusting and locked on him like he was the center of her world. Rick absently massaged the nape of her neck. “I didn’t think…” She trailed off, turning around and skoetching forward until she pressed herself to his chest again, her head nuzzling into his shoulder until his arms raised to hold her closer, his fingers tracing the complex shape the ropes made along her back and around her arms. “You gonna untie me?” she asked with a watery huff. “Those other Morties, they wouldn’t… I think they could only do what their Rick told them to do, you know?”

“Now if only my Morty would be so obedient,” Rick growled, his hands winding up her neck to push the hair out of her face. He stepped back and pulled the screwdriver out of his pocket, using it to break the metal cuffs still wrapped around his own wrists. Morty watched him, her shoulders folding in as much as they could with her arms bound nearly immobile. Rick could hear her breathing; the sound loud and uneven in the echoing silence of the empty hangar. It stirred the adrenaline rushing through Rick’s veins, heightened his senses to a sharp point. Morty’s tongue darted out to moisten her lips and Rick tracked the motion with half-lidded eyes.

“What happened to you?” he demanded, and she jumped when the two thick cuffs circling Rick’s wrists clattered to the ground. “After I got knocked out, what happened?” Morty winced, her eyes darting around his face and her eyebrows crinkling up anxiously. “Last thing I saw, you were trying to claw that Cop-Morty’s eyes out.”

She huffed out a surprised laugh. “Yeah, well - I tried Rick. I got him to stop kicking your face in but - well he didn’t like getting jumped.”

“He hit you?” Rick growled, itching to root that Morty out and flay him alive – he was an unexpected loose end after all.

Morty snorted. “Yeah – but I’ve seen you get in stupid fights enough to – to have an idea of what to do.”

“But he saw you. That cop Morty knows about you.” He was already spinning the dial back to the Citadel but Morty rushed to intervene.

“I - I don’t know about that, Rick. I think he thought I was someone else – he kept on saying ‘Big Morty’s gonna fire your ass’.” Morty shrugged and Rick mulled that over. “He thought I was someone named ‘Twink’. ” Rick barked out an unexpected laugh. Well, that answered that. If the little shit thought Morty was a twink then he had no clue how rare she was. He wasn’t surprised; in her usual t-shirt and jeans, her scrappy body was hardly any different from the rest of the herd. Rick still might hunt the kid down – just to be sure.

“Then what happened?” he prompted, deciding retribution could wait when Morty was still standing around so temptingly helpless.

“A group of Ricks – some other Ricks in white uniforms showed up. They fought about what to do with me and then took you away and I got dragged to that place…” Her eyes went a little distant and Rick felt himself grower. “I – I didn’t know…” she mumbled, her cheeks flushing pink at Rick’s half-cocked eyebrow. “Why are Ricks-” she paused when she caught the half of his unibrow raise even higher, “…why are they like that?” He noticed the pointed accentuation she put of the word ‘they’ like she didn’t want to risk angering him by lumping him in with crowd.
“I to-ooouug-ld you: other Ricks and Morties aren’t your friends,” he reminded her bitingly and she cringed, bare-feet taking a half step back.

“And I - you don’t tell me anything,” she barely whispered when Rick followed her retreat with his longer stride.

“What do you want to know?”

“Won’t you just untie me?” Her voice trembled.

Rick shook his head. “No.”

She sounded on the verge of tears when she asked, “Why not?”

“Because I don’t want to. Next question.” He reached out a hand and dug a finger under the rope below her sternum, stilling her backwards retreat.

Morty’s lip trembled but her face hardened, pointedly catching his eyes when she asked, “Why - why did you follow me to the Citadel with those Morties?”

Rick absently thumbed at her nipple with his free hand, narrowing his eyes at the tiny shiver she tried to repress. “Because I didn’t give you permission to go, Morty.”

“But if you hadn’t climbed in the window and shot at that other Morty, none of this – nothing would have happened!”

He reeled her in closer by the finger looped under her ropes. “No, Morty. If you hadn’t run from me none of this would have happened and I wouldn’t have to figure out a way to ingrain that lesson in your useless brain.” Rick wiped the back of his hand across his lips and scowled. “And that other Morty was dangerous. Trust me.”

Morty scowled. “Did you – is he dead?”

“No,” Rick shrugged, guiding Morty to one of the blast door on the far side of the hangar and keying it open with his palm print. “But don’t wo-ooough-rry, he won’t be coming back for you either.”

The gangway was dark and smelled like stale air but he wasn’t quite ready to return to the Smith house and normal life. He needed Morty to remember today. He needed her to know she went where he let her and she stayed where he put her. Judging from the startled turning of her head as she struggled to make out her surroundings, she was starting to realize that they hadn’t gone to any of their usual, more populated hideouts.

He pushed Morty in front of him, his long fingers curled around her bound forearms, and shuffled her through the ship. When he pressed his palm to another keypad, a smaller door slid open and lights flickered on illuminating a utilitarian bunk. Nothing more than a twin bed, a mirror, and a hidden sink and commode. Rick hadn’t needed to crash there since he’d moved in with the Smiths but it used to be a regular stop on his circuit when he was avoiding detection by the Federation and the Citadel Ricks.

Rick shoved Morty forward, watching her wobble as she capsized onto the firm mattress. “I wasn’t worried about him,” she whispered, wide eyes on him as he stalked into the room and the door slid closed behind his back, trapping her inside the small space with him.

Rick’s voice was heavy in his throat when he purred. “Then who are you worried about, Morty?”
"You."

"Good."

“I don’t - what do you want from me, Rick?” She scrambled away from him as best she could when he kneeled between her legs, skimming his fingers over the thin lines of her shin bones. Rick didn’t miss the subtle way she shifted her legs a little more open and he budged himself further along her body. “Aren’t there infinite versions of me?” she gasped when the back of his fingers skimmed along the inside of her thighs. Rick kept carefully quiet but by some rare moment of insight, Morty guessed his thoughts anyways. “Or is it that I’m the only girl-Morty that makes me so different?”

Rick rolled his eyes up to her open, vulnerable face. “Statistically it’s impossible for you to be the only one. You shouldn’t let what those Morties said go to your head.”

He pulled his multi-tool out of his pocket, flicking open the blade. Concern flickered in her eyes but she didn’t flinch away from him. “But you aren’t – why does that even matter? That I’m a girl?”

“It doesn’t. What matters to me is that you’re my Morty.” Morty licked her lips and Rick watched the motion with laser focus.

Rick fished around in his lab coat pocket until his fingers landed on what he’d been looking for: a coil of golden rope. Fortuitous that he had selected it but at the time he hadn’t quite been able to push the image of Blind-Morty so strikingly tied, his flush skin offsetting the gleaming coils. His Morty looked even more appealing wrapped up in such luxurious bonds, and he was glad he’d inadvertently pocketed matching supplies.

Her chest rose and fell deeply as he unwound the length of rope, sliding the smooth strands through his palms until he’d folded it in half. A quick snick with the knife and he had two even lengths.

“Was it those boy-Morties who have such neat handiwork,” he asked, jerking his chin towards her chest as he gently guided her right leg to bend at the knee. The back of his fingers skimmed gently over the exposed folds of her sex and she jerked at the touch. Her skin was scorching and already wet, a leer curling his cheeks to bare his teeth at the discovery. He pushed her gently back against the one flat pillow at the head of the bed, spreading his hand across her sternum until she rested most of her weight on her bound arms.

Morty nodded slowly, reluctantly, and dragged her lower lip between her teeth.

“Did they take off your nail polish too?” He glanced up at her in time to watch her blanch. “Shh, it’s okay, buddy.”

She inhaled deeply through her nose before she nodded again, her eyes a little teary.

He looped a length of rope above her thigh, settling it neatly in the crease where her leg met her hip. He pressed her knee against her chest, her heel meeting her butt, and circled the rope around her bent leg with a few passes, binding her ankle to her thigh. He thought of Blind-Morty and how neatly he’d been forced to kneel, legs apart but hopelessly hobbled. Frog-tied the word jumped to his mind, some distant memory from his youthful explorations. It had been a while but some things were hard to forget.

“What are you doing?” she asked, a tremor in her voice.

“I wouldn’t want you running away again,” he answered brusquely, continuing his work.

When the slack was nearly used up, he forced a few coils between her thigh and ankle, cinching the
loops tighter and making Morty squeak before he tied it off, admiring his handiwork. Not quite as artfully executed as the ropework on her arms – honestly, even the knots up there were seamless – but more than sufficient to keep her on her knees, evidenced when Morty squirmed against the new hold to no avail.

“What else did they do to you?” Rick asked, distracting himself from his thickening erection and mechanically bending her other leg, repeating the process calmly, methodically, reveling in Morty’s almost motionless compliance.

“A Rick-” she had to pause to clear her throat. “One of those guard Ricks shot me up with something – to heal me I think,” she hurried to add when Rick paused in his motions to glare at her. “I was a little banged up…”

That explained the serum the nanobots had detected in her blood. Inadvertently, Rick’s eyes darted down to her shoulder where he’d purposely marked her. Her skin was smooth and unblemished and Rick hated that in the span of a few hours, he’d been entirely erased from her skin.

He steadied his ragged breathing and reminded himself he wouldn’t need to leave physical marks if he burned his touch into her brain, if he planted himself so deeply inside of her she’d never forget him.

“Anything else?” he demanded.

“They – they washed me,” she whispered. “The mermaid one… and the blind one.”

“Did they like touching you?” Rick couldn’t help but ask, securing her left ankle to her left thigh, yanking the rope a little harder than strictly necessary.

“I – I don’t know. Maybe?” Rick quirked half his eyebrow up at her flushed cheeks, her lips parted and panting. “They spent a little more time with my boobs than strictly necessary…” Rick snorted out a laugh and she continued a little bolstered, “but they couldn’t – they had those things…”

“Chastity cages,” Rick supplied immediately, tying off her other leg and watching her strain her muscles against the cords. Rick congratulated himself on a job well done while he stood, shrugging his lab coat off his shoulders and dropping it on the mattress. The objects in his pockets clattered together, the sound familiar and reassuring.

Morty’s eyes widened when he grabbed a handful of his sweater at the nape of his neck and tugged it over and off his head, his tank top tangled up in the knit fabric and following suit. “Rick?” she asked tentatively, her eyes raking over the slim, ashen expanse of his chest, her torso shifting to leverage herself up onto her knees. His handiwork did the trick; with what little movement she had left to her, she scooted towards the edge of the bunk, kneel-shuffling under his heated glance, but he couldn’t mistake the trail of fire her eyes left in their wake as she studied his newly exposed skin.

He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror and he yanked the sink out from its compartment drawer in the paneled wall. He was covered in blood, most of it seemingly from his nose but he suspected he’d had more than a few scrapes before the nanobots kicked into gear. He cupped a handful of recycled water in his hands, splashing it over his face and tasting the metallic tang of blood mixed with the plastic taste of old, re-filtered water. But with the crusted gore swirling down the drain, he could clearly see his healing bruises. They looked three days old already, his nose shrunk down to its normal shape even if both his eyes were rimmed with deep purple shadows.

“You arm…” Morty muttered and Rick glanced down to the shot the Sentinel-Rick had managed to skim him with. It wasn’t very deep and the nanobots were already at work reweaving his skin but he
rinsed off the trail of blood that trickled down his arm, unreasonably fascinated with the way Morty was watching him with blazing, worried eyes.

“Morty, I think you owe me an apology,” he growled, catching her gaze in the mirror before he turned back to her, nudging the sink back into the wall with his hip. He leaned over the small cot and wrapped his arms around her waist, gently easing her over the edge of the bed until she kneeled on the cold metal grating of the floor. He took her previous place on the bed, sitting down on the low mattress and spreading his legs, caging her between his knees.

Morty, wide-eyed and breathless whispered out, “I’m sorry, Rick,” without pause and Rick could hear the heavy swallow that followed her words.

“Sorry for what?” he asked and could tell by the way her irises dilated that the words sounded as familiar to her as they did to him.

She must have learned something from the last time they’d had this conversation because she immediately stammered, “I’m – I’m sorry for not listening to you. I’m sorry for running away and getting caught by that other Rick. I’m sorry you got kicked in the head and – and nearly killed because I’m...” she trailed off when tears started dripping down her cheeks. “I’m sorry Rick. I was so scared, I didn’t think – I wasn’t sure you were going to come back for me,” she admitted on a sob, nuzzling desperately into the palm he pressed against her cheek. “Please don’t be mad at me, Rick.”

Rick sighed and swiped the tears off her cheeks while he hummed in the back of his throat. “You can’t avoid me Morty. If you stay after class, I’ll keep you home from school. If you go off planet, I’ll track you down.” She stilled, her cheeks between his hands, her eyes wide and staring through his stomach. She let out one long shaky exhale as his thumb absently swiped at a trail of tears. “Now I think you have to make it up to me, Morty,” he rasped, his world zeroing down to her lips and the wet sheen of them in the flickering florescent lighting.

“Make – make it up to you?” she whispered, her eyebrows tenting. Rick swept her bangs back from her forehead when some strange tide of warmth coalesced in his stomach at the trusting glance she swept up his bare chest to rest on his mouth.

“Yeah Morty, you’ve got to make it up to me,” he whispered back softly, tracing a thumb along the plump velvet of her lower lip. “You’re glad I came back for you, right Morty? Don’t you want to show your appreciation?” She slowly nodded, skeptical brown orbs dancing back and forth between his eyes when he pressed the pad of his finger past her lips, breathing heavily at the wet heat of her mouth.

She tracked his hands when he pulled back, canting his hips up to more easily unbutton and unzip his slacks. Fear licked at the corner of Morty’s eyes and Rick shushed her calmly as a practiced hand maneuvered his erection from the confines of his pants, the thick length bobbing imposingly less than a foot from Morty’s face. Her breathing spiked and Rick watched her nanobot reading in the corner of his eye blink a warning for elevated heartrate. She tried to shuffle back but Rick caught the rope wrapping around her upper arms and held her still, bracing his elbows on his knees.

“Rick, I – I don’t know...” Morty exhaled, leaning away from him when he pushed his face up close to hers.

“Morty, do you want to do this the easy way or the hard way?” he drolled, his patience wearing thin. The logical part of his mind shouted ‘You have to be nice! She’ll run away from you! She’ll be afraid of you!’ but that ravenous monster that wanted to swallow her whole egged him on. He breathed out through his nose slowly, closing his eyes and forcing the anger to recede. He didn’t want to do anything to Morty out of anger. This was a lesson she had to learn but he would dole it out with an
When he opened his eyes, he felt less bogged down by rage. Morty’s quivering lips still called to him but he gently pressed his mouth to her forehead, breathing out a long sigh against her skin.

“Don’t you want to be my good little buddy, Morty?” he breathed into her ear, the smell of strange soap overwhelming with his nose buried in her hair. “Don’t you want to make Grandpa happy?”

She shivered under his palm. “I – Rick, I don’t know how,” she whispered, her voice shaking.

“I know, baby. I’ve got you, I’ll teach you how.” He scooted to the edge of the cot, his stiff length jutting out towards Morty’s pale face. Her lips were a tight line. She leaned back but Rick stopped her retreat by catching her nipples in a fierce pinch.

“Rick…” she gasped and the sound made his cock throb. “Hard way it is,” he growled, fisting a hand in the back of her hair and digging the other into the pocket of his discarded lab coat. The requested item slotted easily into his hand, and he held it up in front of Morty’s pinched face, her eyebrows furrowing at the sight of it. “Do you know what this is?” he asked her, holding up the gold metal loop trailing two leather straps on either side of it. “Huh, Morty? Does this look familiar to you?”

Morty’s rolled her lips into her mouth and shook her head but Rick didn’t miss the way her pupils expanded, blowing out the brown of her irises until he was boring down into two black holes.

Rick smirked. “You know what this is, you little pervert.” He caught her chin up in his grip and pressed his thumb into her mouth, much less gently than he had the last time. With her teeth pried apart, he slid the ring between them, flipping it until her jaw was forced wide open, her tongue working uselessly to dispel the metal loop. “I know what you watch when you get yourself off. You’ve seen a ring gag before.” He pulled the straps below her hair and cinched the buckle tight, his frustration and arousal encouraging him to notch the clasp two holes tighter than he would if he weren’t so unstable. But Morty’s eyes, starlight bright and glued on him, made him think she wasn’t entirely opposed to the strict treatment.

He leaned back to take in the whole picture, his hands absently tracing back to her tits to soothe the sting he’d inflicted on her pink, pebbled nipples.

Kneeling before him, her mouth gaping open expectantly and her small breasts jutting up desperately into his palms, Rick was fairly sure he’d never seen something so enticing – and he had been around the block more than a few times. In all his life, on any planet, in any universe, he’d never found a sexual partner quite so perfectly suited to his tastes. No one had so completely and sweetly resisted their obvious desires. No one made his augmented heart pound with the absolute control he wielded over them. And no one ever blinked up at him so helplessly, so desperately enticed and still somehow unwilling. The surge of endorphins that rushed through his bloodstream rivaled some of the best highs he’d ever chased and Rick was struck once again by the immediate and all-consuming thought you can’t ever let her go.

The arousal tempered his anger to a low burn and his dick throbbed with anticipation. A shiny string of drool slipped over Morty’s lip and she ducked her head in embarrassment, the position encouraging gravity to expel more saliva down her chin until it dripped onto her sternum. She made a garble wet noise; a sad and pleading sound.

Rick caught up her chin and tilted it up, irrationally endeared by the timid scrunch of her eyes. “Oh,
Morty,” he sighed, dipping two fingers into her mouth and running them along the hot satin of her tongue. “You like making it hard for yourself, don’t you?” he asked, retracting his wet fingers and circling them over the head of his cock. Morty watched, her eyes wide in fascination as he stroked himself leisurely, tip to base. “You’re a little masochist, aren’t you?”

Rick buried his hand in the hair at the base of her neck, fisting her brown locks in a tight hold. Her eyes, huge and shining and beseeching, locked onto his like a beacon. He pulled her towards his straining erection, the shaft jumping with the pulse of his blood. The way she kept her black pupils on his face, her eyelids dropping to half-mast, crashed a new flood of lust down his spine.

“Come on, Morty. You have an idea of what to do.”

The first touch of Morty’s warm, wet tongue to the tip of his dick was cosmic bliss; like planets aligning and stars colliding and the Big Bang slamming time and matter into existence from the vast emptiness of infinity.

The slow pressure, the soft press and then roll that Morty initiated when she swirled her unpracticed tongue over his head nearly made Rick lose it. He sucked in an uneven, steadying breath and grinned down at her, probably more than a little maniacally.

“My perfect girl,” he whispered reverently and Morty’s eyelashes fluttered. He pressed his dick into her mouth a little deeper, his eyes rolling at the feeling of her tongue pressing against the thick vein on the underside of his shaft. The ring was perfectly sized to fit his girth – which was exactly what he expected; Maximus Rickimus was clearly no stranger to these games – the width almost too much of a strain for Morty’s jaw but she was handling it like a champ. The heat of her mouth was exquisite and he rolled his hips slowly, shallowly thrusting against her tongue and losing himself to that inferno.

“You can take me deeper, Morty,” he urged, stilling himself, her lips barely grazing the halfway point of his dick. He pressed her slowly forward, easing deeper into her mouth, his leaking head budging at the entrance to her throat. Her eyes darted back up to him, tears springing suddenly to the corners of her eyes. “Go ahead Morty, I want to watch you swallow me.”

Rick was fairly sure that the determined glint in her watery eyes just before Morty shuffled a little closer would be burned into his memory for the rest of his life. And if it wasn’t; when dementia or Alzheimer’s or complete and utter madness took over and his memory turned to mush, he’d still have the footage from his cybernetic eye - hallelu-fuckina-juiah for that.

He groaned long and low and watched the shiver the sound of his voice elicited skim down Morty’s shoulders and settle between her legs. She was squirming, her thighs clenching and her hips rolling unconsciously, seeking out friction. Rick drooled at the sight. “You’re so fucking horny, aren’t you Morty. Bet you’ve been horny since that boy-Morty tied you up. My desperate girl, my fucking pervert,” he cursed, loving the way his words spurred her to take him deeper, to bob her head, to tongue furiously at the underside of his cock, his hand urging her onward by the grip in her hair.

She gagged a bit when she got about two thirds of the way down and Rick reluctantly let her ease up, using his hold to keep her still while he thrust slowly and rhythmically, never exceeding the depth that he had mentally marked as her limit. He didn’t want to scar her. He wanted her to enjoy herself, he wanted her to want to put his dick in her mouth again and choking her half to death with it wasn’t going to make that very likely. It was only her first time. There would be plenty of time to work on her stamina.

Besides, the satisfaction of watching himself disappear past her lips, the dripping drool she couldn’t help slavering over his cock, the rosy flush of her cheeks below her glassy, molten eyes was enough
more than enough; made this one of the best blow-jobs of his long life and he’d been with creatures that could do things with their mouths that defied reality.

He tugged her back from where she’d managed to take even more of him down her throat, her spasming muscles a delicious clench - maybe too delicious too soon. He gripped himself, running the head of his cock across her spit-drenched bottom lip, groaning at the shivering breath she inhaled and the licks she pressed against his leaking slit. He held her in place when she tried to surge forward, trying to coax him into her mouth with her tongue.

“Do you like getting me off, Morty?” he murmured, pulling her hair until her head titled back so when he pressed into her mouth, the tip bumped against the roof of her mouth. “Do you like what you do to me?”

He released her hair and stroked lazily up and down his shaft, the path slippery with her spit. She watched him pump himself, mesmerized by the motion, the blush staining her cheeks trailing down to her chest. He followed the red trail with his free hand, cupping a small breast and chuckling darkly when she arched into his touch and gurgled a wet, open-mouthed moan.

“That other Rick; he wanted to do this to you, Morty,” Rick maliciously whispered, watching the cloud of arousal thin over her eyes. “Would you have liked that, Morty?” Fearfully, she shook her head, her tongue moving like she wanted to swallow but the ring gag made that impossible. “Would you be a squirming, desperate mess for him too?” When she only blinked balefully up at him, he pinched her nipple until she shook her head again, the motion short and jerky.

“When I woke up in the Citadel without you, Morty, I thought that was it,” he said and it wasn’t until the words were out of his mouth that he knew they were true. His hand stilled and she quieted, even her heavy panting softening to little chuffs like she was desperate to hear every word out of his mouth. “I thought I’d never see you again. I thought I was going to be dragged off and killed and you’d disappear into whatever sick web those Council Ricks spin, that you’d be passed around and hurt, Morty. Those Ricks would hurt you.”

He could feel the lines of his face exaggerated by his scowl and he felt old in a way he almost never did. Morty was staring up at him with something akin to shock. About fucking time.

He had only scraped them out of that situation by the skin of his teeth and a series of coincidences that swayed things in his favor. But in some other universe, Morticia’s Rick was dead and she was still being strangled by a rope in a sociopath’s sex-mansion.

He refocused on the vulnerable tilt to Morty’s eyebrows. “You’re my Morty,” he asserted strongly and flames licked at the back of her liquid brown eyes. “I’m the only one who’ll ever touch you,” he vowed dipping his fingers into her mouth to re-moisten his hand, stoking apathetically at his slightly flagged erection. “If I have to rearrange the universe to keep you, I will. I’m the master of your world, Morty. I’m your creator and your god.” They were both panting, her gaze electric where it met his. “Are you ever going to run away again?”

She shook her head.

“Are you going to avoid me or refuse me?”

She shook her head again.

“Are you going to make it up to me?” he asked psuedo-sweet, taking his hand off his thickening cock and leaning back, studying Morty’s prone, pried open form.

As an answer, she shuffled forward, rocking up onto her toes to find a better angle to maneuver
Rick’s jerking erection into the ring of her mouth. Her movements were awkward and sloppy but what she lacked in finesse she made up for with determination as her throat convulsed against the intrusion, her nose burying itself in the wiry blue/grey hair at the base of his dick.

They both choked; Morty pulling back to tongue at his head while Rick’s head lolled on his shoulders and his eyes rolled back in his head. He had not been prepared for that. And judging by the raspy breathing around his cock, Morty hadn’t either. Her over-eagerness burst the dam he’d built to hold back his affection and he smiled around his pleasure, a bubble of something almost giddy worming its way up his throat. He beat back the laugh it threatened, combing the hair out of Morty’s face, brushing away the strands that had stuck to her wet lips.

She worked him furiously, bobbing up and down a little uncoordinated but the strange surge of emotions mingled with the sight of her struggling against her binds to get him off was driving him to the edge on a bullet train anyways. Rick was reluctant to admit it, but he’d been on the brink since he first felt the searing heat of her mouth and watching her force his impressive length down her throat, small gurgling gags echoing off the metal walls of his isolated bunk as she swallowed more and more of him had his vision whiting out in less than two minutes.

He fisted his hand in her hair and pulled out enough to watch semen spurt across the red velvet of her tongue. A sticky rope hit her in the back of the throat and she coughed a bit, eyes watering and locked on Rick’s face. She couldn’t swallow the mess, something Rick slightly regretted about his choice in the gag, but it was gratifying to watch the white fluid pool in her mouth and drip over her lips, her tongue laving at it uselessly.

“Fucking perfect, Morty,” he growled and when some of his cum threatened to drip off her chin, he swiped it up with two fingers and pressed it back into her mouth, smearing it onto her tongue. She squirmed, liquid fire eyes searing him with desire.

Placidly he tucked himself back into his slacks and rested his elbows on his knees, studying the wiggling, desperate girl at his feet. Distractedly he pinched her nipples, and she groaned in response, her sloppy mouth dripping spit and cum onto her wet chest.

“You want me to touch you, Morty?” he asked, his hand trailing down her stomach to ruffle her trimmed hairs. She nodded quickly, skootching closer to his wandering hand. “You want me to get you off?” he sing-songed, his other hand fishing through the pocket of his discarded lab coat. He found what he wanted immediately. He’d been thinking about it since Blind-Morty had offered it to him on a golden platter. He dropped it on the bed and sought out another item from his new collection.

When Rick rolled the bulbous plug in the sticky wet mess pooling in Morty’s mouth, her eyes popped open in surprise. He quickly gripped her hair and tilted her head back, sliding to his knees in front of her. With her head pried back, she couldn’t follow the trail of saliva and semen he painted down her throat and chest and stomach, the back of his knuckles teasing at her slick folds. She was so wet Rick almost felt bad for her but she needed to learn. And the idea of torturing her with abstinence made his spent dick struggle to throb.

When he bypassed her slit and pressed the round edge of a fairly short but thick butt plug against her rear entrance, she squawked, struggling to jerk away but the rope on her legs kept her from getting too far. The mess of their combined fluids lubricated the way and despite her frantic clenching, he was making headway.

“Shhhhh, Morty,” her murmured into her ear, hugging her close to his chest and pressing the plug insistently against her resistance. “Relax, Morty. I’ve got you. You’ve gotta – Morty you’ve gotta push into it. Come on, baby.”
Rick's hands circled an arm around her waist, pressing her pebbled nipples against his bare chest. He'd never touched so much of her skin to skin, and Morty must have realized that at the same time because she infinitesimally relaxed, curving her body into his chest when the widest part of the plug finally slipped passed her sphincter and the wide flat base nestled between her cheeks. Rick held it in place with his spread palm, panting in time with her as his body surged with excitement again.

"That's it, buddy," Rick praised, pressing his lips to her ear then her temple. "Just one more thing," he promised, snatching the gold plated straps off the bed and wrapping the wide band around the narrowest part of her waist. It fit like a glove, cinching in the front with a metal clasp just barely shy of too tight, the metal welded perfectly against her skin. They must have measured her, Rick thought absently. Made sense. It had to be specially made, after all.

The last strap dangled down from the center of the back, the shape curved to match her body when Rick threaded it between her legs. It narrowed to curve tight into her ass crack, the metal plating pressing snug against the base of the butt plug, but the width expanded towards the front, curving to perfectly cup her lips and mons, trapping them under a wide metal band. He clicked the end of the strap into the locking mechanism over her navel, unsurprised to find it a perfect fit.

Morty made a confused noise in the back of her throat and tilted her head down to study the new addition to her body, her eyebrows scrunched together.

"It's a chastity belt, Morty," Rick answered her unasked question, scooting back up to settle on the edge of the cot. "It'll keep the plug in and your fingers out."

Morty frowned as much as she could around the ring gag still distorting her face and her tongue worked to form the word 'why'.

"Because, Morty, you only get to feel good if you are good. Today you got us wrapped up in a bunch of bullshit. You didn’t listen to me, and you actively disobeyed me. Let this serve as a reminded that I own you.” Rick dipped his thumb back into her mouth, feeling the hard ridges of her teeth. She squirmed again, struggling to press her thighs together but finding no friction behind the metal plates. “Maximums Rickimus had some serious control issues,” he murmured and didn’t miss the disbelieving way she raised one of her eyebrows.

"Okay, okay," he chuckled, his hands following the straps on the side of the gag under her hair. “I’ll take this off, at least.” He unbuckled the latch and slipped the gag from between her teeth, watching her closely as she rotated her jaw and tongued the built up drool and semen over her lip, closing her eyes as she swallowed. “Uncomfortable, wasn’t it?” he asked and her eyes were conceding when they met his and she nodded. “Might think twice about refusing me next time, huh?”

She huffed out her nose, almost a little laugh. “Y-eah,” she rasped out. She cleared her throat roughly and licked her lips. “Water?” she gasped out, adding a “please,” almost as an afterthought.

“Yeah, buddy, you stay right there,” Rick smirked, swinging his leg over her head and padding to the door. With a swipe of his hand it opened and slid closed behind him. Not that she could get anywhere tied up the way she was, but Rick was glad she couldn’t follow him when he passed the huge bay window on the way to his rations stash. He glanced over disinterestedly, thinking about how surreal it was to be here when only hours before he’d been standing in a trial using images taken from this very view to peg him down to be executed. Luckily he’d dodged that bullet. And with the Council gone and the Citadel topsy-turvy with the Federation literally up its ass, he might not have to worry about this particular swath of crimes coming up again anytime soon.
He grabbed a couple water bottles and rehydrated the ration pack he thought Morty might like the most: a sweet turnover type of thing made with alien fruit – round transparent gems that resembled bobas but tasted like the lovechild from a pineapple/brown sugar/white chocolate threesome.

On his way back, he didn’t even spare a glance at the frozen bodies on the other side of the silica glass.

When he palmed open the door, Morty was pretty much where he’d left her, kneeling in the thin stretch of space between the cot and the metal wall, but she’d leaned forward, resting her cheek on the thin mattress, her eyes a little heavy lidded as she writhed against the metal between her legs, her hips rocking, seemingly of their own accord.

Rick wasn’t sure how he felt about the surge of affection he felt at the sight of her so he chose to ignore it, toeing off his shoes and yanking off his socks, climbing onto the cot to fold himself cross-legged in front of her. She peered up at him wearily, taking more interest in the plastic pouch of food in his hands than in him. Rick quirked half his eyebrow at that.

“Rick,” she cut herself off when the name was little more than a rasp. Rick stroked back her hair and unscrewed the cap from a water, tilting it to her lips and ignoring the aggravated huff she breathed out before she leaned into it. He slowly fed her mouthfuls of water, wiping up the drops that slid from the corners of her lips. After a few sips she pulled back. “You know - if you untied me I could do this myself…”

Rick raised his eyebrow and recapped the bottle, turning to dig under the cot for the flask he could have sworn he’d left last time he’d crashed there. He found it tucked under the thin mattress and by shaking it discovered it was more than half-full. His lucky day. He poured half the contents straight into his mouth. He was never going that long without drinking again. He didn’t realize until he’d swallowed the metallic vodka down that he’d been combating the withdrawal symptoms with adrenaline and now that he’d orgasmed, he was staring down the barrel of a downward spiral unless he got his blood-alcohol back somewhere up to normal. Morty sighed when he ignored her to take another long pull from the flask.

“And is this – this thing really necessary?” she whined, glaring down at the gold between her legs, her arms giving a half-hearted twist against her bondage.

“Hey bud, you’re the one who earned a punishment,” he shrugged, peeling the plastic casing off the ration pack, a cloud of fragrant steam billowing into his face and filling the room with the scent of fruit and sugar. Morty perked up immediately at the smell. “If you’re good, you’ll have a chance to earn a reward.”

“Tonight?” she asked hopefully, edging closer to Rick’s knee as he peeled the supplied plastic spork off the packaging and scooped up a bite. He blew on it, his eyebrow a flat line while he studied Morty through half lidded eyes.

“Tomorrow,” he promised, offering the bite to her. “I’m not as young as I used to be, Morty.” She tilted her head at the statement but immediately opened her mouth and accepted the morsel, her eyes rolling closed at the taste. She had no idea the rehydrated ration was just a shadow of what the dish normally tasted like and Rick made the mental note to take her out to the corner of the Andromeda Galaxy the meal was native from and where every greasy intergalactic-spoon offered their own twist on the classic. He took a bite himself and the idea cemented itself even firmer in his head.

Morty happily accepted a few more bites and a few more sips of water before a thought started furrowing the skin between her eyebrows. “I’m not really the only Morticia in the multiverse, right? Don’t – No jokes, Rick,” she stammered out when he started to roll his eyes. “Be honest.”
“I’m always honest, Morty,” he chided but Morty looked unimpressed. He sighed and stuffed another sporkful in her mouth to allay her pinched frown. “Statistically I can’t imagine that’s true.” He wiped a sticky crumb off her lip and licked it off his finger. “But so far as I’ve heard of, yes.” If he had been expecting her to feel good about that fact; that it would go to her head thinking she was special or important or something equally self-absorbed, he was stopped short by the sad little pout her face curled into. “You don’t look happy about that.” What was there to be unhappy about? In a universe of carbon copies, she was somewhat unique.

“It’s kind of sad, isn’t it Rick?” she muttered, her eyes glazing over a bit until they looked through Rick. He poked at a transparent berry and mechanically shoveled it into his mouth. “Kind of lonely.”

“Welcome to the universe, Morty,” Rick said grandly, gesturing widely to the room with the spork and the half-eaten pouch of food. “Everyone’s lonely, nothing matters, and the sooner you get used to your own insignificance, the sooner you can drop all the bullshit and start enjoying yourself.”

She looked up at him with a funny kind of glint in her eyes and Rick barely bit back the demand to know what she was thinking. It didn’t matter what she was thinking. He’d just said it himself. He scraped up the last bite and watched her open her mouth reflexively to receive it.

He licked up the last of the sauce clinging to the spork and dumped it and the packaging into the recycling chute. After he fed her a few more gulps of water, he lifted her back up onto the bed, her slight weight a little more awkward when she had no way to help him by grabbing on. She groaned out, “Watch my butt!” when he dropped her onto the bed and then erupted into self-pitying but genuine laughter. The only remaining thread in Rick’s mind that wasn’t a complete monster gratified itself that he hadn’t erased her ability to do so in his presence. How far was too far? He wanted to own her completely, entirely, but he didn’t want to diminish the light that sparkled in the back of her eyes. He wanted her laughter. He wanted her stupid jokes. He wanted that little jolt to attention she did every time he walked into the room.

Thing was; Rick had a special talent for destroying the things he wanted.

Morty’s laughter died down and he realized he’d been chuckling with her, relieved. She watched him through half lidded eyes when he arranged her to lean against the wall, her legs curled up to her stomach. She’d tightened the knots with her struggling but it was nothing his nimble fingers couldn’t pry loose. He unwound one leg, massaging the indented skin and easing the limb out straight, kneading the inside of her thighs and the meat of her calves. She sighed into his ministrations and the sound unwound the vice around his heart a notch. When he got to work on the other leg, he didn’t miss the way she nudged her gold-plated crotch against his fingers, her bottom lip squeezed between her teeth.

He chuckled at her obvious frustration, unlooping the ropes and pulling her other leg out straight, rubbing it down in patient strokes. Rick wasn’t a stranger to maintenance; to aftercare. A machine ran better when you took care of it. If Morty was looking at him sweetly through her heavy lashes, clearly thinking things about him being soft or kind or some other useless garbage, he didn’t have the energy to correct her. His hand inadvertently circled her foot, his thumb pressing into her arch before he caught himself and scowled.

When he propped her forward, slipping into the space between the wall and her back, she leaned up patiently, even as he began making progressively more aggravated noises between his teeth. “What the fuck?” he cursed, running his fingers along the seams between her arms and following the rope with his fingers. “How – is this fucking magic?” It was distressing him to find out a Morty was better than him at something, especially if that something was an obscure sexual art.
As if she could read his mind, Morty giggled and said, “It might make you feel better to know it was the tentacle-armed Morty who did the - the tying,” over her shoulder and Rick pointedly swept her hair into her face. She spluttered out the strands but he could hear her grin when she continued, “If it hadn’t been – you know, _distressing_ – it would have been kinda impressive.”

“Okay, that’s it,” Rick growled, digging the multi-tool out of his pocket and sawing at the ropes around her wrists. When it _snicked_ free, Rick felt a strange weight lift off his chest, the rest of the intricate pattern slackening as he unwound it from around her arms and torso. “Ah! Pins and needles,” she muttered as he chucked the offending ropes to the floor and slowly guided her hands to her sides, pulling her back by her shoulders until she lay against his chest, cradled between his legs, his hands kneading long strokes into her trembling arms.

It didn’t surprise him at all that once she’d stopped clenching and unclenching her hands, her fingers zeroed in on the gold strap between her legs. She tried to wiggles her fingers under each side then under the waistband and Rick let her learn for herself how impenetrable it was, turning his head to the side to polish off the flask before he slapped her hands away.

“Jeez Rick, did it have to be so tight?” she complained, bracing herself against his chest so she could cant her hips up and trace the path it cut between her butt cheeks. “And did you have to put… that thing is so big, Rick…”

She flopped back down and Rick watched the path her fingers absently traced on her inner thighs. He knew that move, he’d seen her do it before from the camera on her laptop. It was one of her favorite ways to tease herself when she was working up to masturbating. He shifted behind her, wrapping one arm around her waist and massaging the rope marks across her chest while the other encouraged her to spread her legs.

“What thing?” he asked, cupping the underside of her breasts on the pretense of soothing the indented skin.

Morty huffed. “You know what thing,” she grumbled and Rick swept her hair to one shoulder so he could nibble along her exposed skin. Morty gasped; a quiet little breathy noise that went straight to Rick’s stomach.

“You’ve got to tell me, Morty,” he mumbled into her ear.


He laughed, and she tried to pull away from him. She got halfway off the cot before he spun her back to him, dragging her into his lap and tugging a knee to either side of his hips until she was straddling him, her pouting face glaring down at him with a vitriolic sweetness he’d only seen Morty pull off. Surrounded by Rick’s utilitarian metal bunk, her long brown hair cascading over her pale shoulders and with gold glinting around her waist and between her legs, she looked like a transplant from some campy sci-fi novel; the innocent kidnapped maiden maybe, or else the submissive slave. Rick didn’t hate the visualization.

He spanned his hands around her waist and dragged her down, grinding up against the metal. Her eyes fluttered closed but her brow furrowed. “That – that only pushed that thing up harder,” she whimpered, her hands covering his when he repeated the motion but they didn’t push him away.

“It’s not even that big, Morty,” Rick taunted and she cracked her eye open to glare at him. “You’ve smuggled worse through intergalactic customs.”

“Well then – maybe next time we should put it up _your_ ass, Rick,” she chuffed and Rick snorted out
a laugh.

“Wouldn’t be the first time, Morty,” he cackled, the sound loud enough to echo when she squinted down at him.

Rick stopped tugging her down but found she kept up the motion on her own, rolling her hips against his, desperate for friction. “Can’t you just-” Morty cut herself off, biting down hard on her lip.

“Can’t I what?”

“I – can I please cum, Rick?” she asked so sweetly he almost thought it over for longer than a second. “Please Rick?”

Rick stopped his thrusting and stilled her grinding with the hands around her waist. “Tomorrow. If you’re good.”

“Tomorrow?” Morty whined, languid when he dragged her back against his chest and curled them onto their sides, boxing her in between his body and the wall.

“If you’re good. Think you can be good, Morty?” he asked, turning to yank open a drawer next to the cot and one handedly sling a rough blanket over their curved bodies.

Morty pressed her back into his chest, wiggling until her ass slotted perfectly into the curve of his hips. It was like spooning a hot stone, her skin radiating warmth and melting the tension from his literally aching bones. He chuckled again into her shoulder and she sighed. “I can be good, Rick,” she conceded reluctantly, tugging his arms to hold her a little tighter. “Jeez, are your toes made of ice?” she gripped when he tangled his legs with hers but she didn’t pull away, only pressed the warm soles of her feet to his much bigger ones. He felt along the wall above his head for the light panel, his finger finding the button by touch, and the room slipped into the dim grey of almost complete darkness, the thin barely-there track of emergency lights lining the door the only break from the black.

Chapter End Notes

No cliffhanger this time but plenty of smut ;)}
Chapter Ten

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When Rick cracked open his eyes, he was momentarily lost in a time slip; the soft lighting rimming the door of his bunk in the isolated hide-away - the place he scurried off to between planets and jobs and flings - momentarily dropping his mind back to a time before.

Was he still on the run? How had he wormed his way out of the Canes Venatici Sector? Had he brought someone back to his bunk?

The warm body spooned against his stomach seemed to imply as much. Crap. This ship was supposed to be a secret, not a fucking love hotel. And he’d thought he’d sworn off the idea of bringing someone back there after he let Squanchy bunk with him that one night they got too drunk and he dialed in the wrong dimensional code. Rick had woken up with two black eyes from Squanchy’s restless sleep-kicking and decided his bachelor bunk was meant for one body and one body only.

The girl (definitely female and human by the feel of her) turned over, a small hand landing on his naked peck. With the movement came a familiar smell and he clicked the light on to dim mode. The darkness slowly receded to reveal Morty, his Morty, curled into his side, her chestnut hair tickling his chin and trailing into her open mouth.

He breathed out a heavy sigh as the last year or so came slamming back home to his brain, particularly the events of the day before.

That’s right. The Citadel fell – or at least was badly damaged. Rick had dodged a hasty execution. He’d found Morty before she experienced anything worse than some minor, prolonged breath-play. And then he’d brought her here.

A strange decision to be sure considering the graveyard floating on the other side of the metal paneling but it was one of the few corners of the multiverse that was unquestionably his.

Morty shifted again, her face scrunching up at the low lighting. She buried it against Rick’s sternum and dragged the scratchy blanket up over her head, her fingers twitching against the bare skin of his collar bone. Keeping his upper body as still as possible, he reached over and slid open a drawer, feeling around for a bottle. Maybe some forgotten tall-boy he’d squirreled away. Or some little minibar bottles he’d stolen in a blackout and accidentally hidden from himself. It happened surprisingly often. Drunk Rick tended to do the liquor acquiring, a convenient constant loop for sober Rick who hated the chore.

His hand landed on something glass and he squinted at it in the half light. Tequila. It would do. He struggled to chug from the mostly full bottle without dislodging Morty and enough of the liquid made it into his mouth and down his throat to count as a win.

“You smell like Summer when she gets hug-y,” Morty’s sleep-thick voice informed him from the bundle of blankets over his heart.

“I sho-ooouh-lda pegged Summer for a tequila girl,” Rick smirked, tossing back another sloppy gulp. “I wonder if it’s shots or margaritas,” he absently pondered and the blanket retreated enough for one scowling eye to glower up at him.
“Whichever – whatever gets her drunk enough to star-fuck the theater kids,” Morty asserted and Rick raised an eyebrow.

“Didn’t know you were so grumpy in the morning, Morty,” Rick chuckled. “I thought that was supposed to be me.”

“It’ll be your turn to be grumpy when you sleep with a fucking rock up your ass,” Morty pouted, her hands disappearing under the blanket and Rick didn’t need to see what she was doing to guess she was picking at the chastity belt. He didn’t need to see it but he still wanted to so he swept the blanket off the both of them and watched her fingers twist at the seamless place the straps had clasped together. “Now can you please take this thing off of me?” she demanded petulantly, turning her frustrated face up to his.

“I don’t know. Do you think you learned your lesson?” he asked seriously, skootching back far enough to lean against the metal wall, lacing his fingers and tucking them behind his head.

Morty’s cheeks flushed pink and the skin between her eyebrows wrinkled. Rick expected her to snark something back at him, or maybe whine a little more before ultimately playing up her pout until he relented. What he didn’t expect was the timid hand that landed on his stomach, her fingers searing hot as they toyed with the blue/grey hairs that trailed from his navel down into his waistband. She quirked up a look at him like she was trying to gauge his reaction and he kept his face carefully blank, desperately curious to see where this was going.

For a while she simply traced his skin, her hand pink and soft and smooth in comparison to his pallid, scarred skin while she surveyed the panes of his stomach. If Rick’s heart wasn’t cybernetic, it might be pounding. Yet again, there was nothing skilled about Morty’s touching; nothing inherently sexy in the way she skimmed her fingertips along the waistband of his pants, but her soft curiosity, the genuine exploration and the interest with which she studied his skin was setting him on fire. No one had looked at Rick or his body like that in years.

Hookups were animalistic. Debauched. He’d seen a sea of hungry eyes and he’d gotten used to thinking being looked at like he was something to be devoured was the best kind of compliment in the galaxy.

The slow, casual way that she traced a scar made him reevaluate that, like she wasn’t just looking at his skin or his body or the things that he could do. It was like she was trying to see inside him, or – he realized suddenly and with terrifying certainty – that she already had and still enjoyed the view.

“How’d you get this?” Morty asked absently, and Rick had to wrack his brain for the answer.

“Got –uurrrp- shanked. A bar fight when I was – jeez – barely older than you,” Rick hummed, absurdly focused on Morty and the way she trailed her hand to another scar, seemingly unintentionally finding all the raised skin with her fingertips. Her eyebrows tented and she glanced up at him with a strange question in her eyes before she ducked down and pressed a small kiss to the jagged skin that had once been split by a broken piece of glass.

The steady breath that Rick had been holding left his mouth in a surprised huff. Her lips were hotter than her hands.

Rick wasn’t sure what kind of face he was making but Morty’s self-consciousness dimmed slightly and she scooted lower, pressing another kiss to the ashen skin below his navel. “Morty,” he growled when her hand smoothed over the fabric of his slacks, his very interested anatomy jerking into her palm. She glanced back up at him uncertainly and he desperately didn’t want her to stop so he tried
his best to look encouraging. “Fuck, you make me crazy,” he whispered and a smile quirked her lips almost coyly.

“You - you already were crazy, Rick,” she chuckled around the words but Rick barely heard them because she had slipped her hand into the open zipper of his slacks and traced her searing fingers along the length of his shaft.

She’d never touched him before. Correction: she’d never initiated anything before. Thank fucking god he’d had his heart replaced or he was sure he’d be in cardiac arrest. Almost on instinct, he double checked that he hadn’t accidentally set of the trigger that would stop his heart but the dull pulse of tightness in his chest was all his own.

Her touches were awkward, she griped him lightly and struggled to figure out the best way to tug him out of his pants but Rick refused to help, too giddy with her new found interest and more than willing to let her do all the work.

She frowned a little worried pout down to his pants before she hesitantly caught the waistband on either side of his hips and shimmied it lower, Rick raising his hips slightly from the cot to ease the passage.

He hadn’t really expected her to entirely undress him, the would be too bold, even for this new determined Morty stroking the freshly exposed skin of his hip, but he was still a little disappointed when she only lowered the V of his spread open fly enough for his erection to spring out, surprising her with its proximity to her face.

She studied it unashamedly in the half-light. He regretted not kicking the lights up brighter; he wanted to catch every micro-expression that flitted across her face, but he suspected she’d revert to her usual shyness if he flipped them on now.

Gently, she wrapped her hand around the base of his dick to brace his throbbing while she trailed a finger from her other hand down the thick vein on the back of it. Rick shuddered, less in response to her touch than to the fascinated, bright-eyed interest she was boring down at him with.

The hand that was circling the base lifted, the circle of her hand gentle as it grazed over the shaft, fingers feather-light, until her thumb trailed over the head, swiping up the trickle of precum he’d leaked on her teasing path upwards.

“I-” she cut herself off abruptly, her voice loud in the silence of Rick’s small bunk. When she started again, her voice was much softer and she couldn’t quite meet his eyes. “I don’t really know what I’m doing, Rick,” she bashfully explained, the rosy tint of her cheeks dropping the bottom out of Rick’s stomach.

“That’s okay, Morty.” His voice was rough and he pried his hands from behind his head to snatch up the tequila bottle and take another big swig. Morty frowned at the action, her hand unconsciously tightening around his shaft. Rick choked through a groan, swiping away the spilled tequila from his chin with his forearm.

She dragged her tighter grip down and Rick banged his head against the wall when he let his neck go limp. “I mean, I guess I’ve seen – you know porn and stuff,” she muttered, her eyes almost mischievous when they caught his.

“Really Morty? I had n-oooouh-o idea,” Rick bit back on a gasp when she tugged her hand back up. He caught up her wrist, yanked it to his mouth and licking a wet stripe up her palm, replacing it back where he’d found it. She instinctively swirled the moisture over the head before continuing her
torturous stroking. “I thought – all that exaggerating moaning coming from your bedroom I figured you were running train.”

Morty frowned and withdrew her hand but Rick caught it up and returned it.

“I’m gonna make you some headphones, Morty,” he promised, curling his hand over hers and guiding it, teaching her the way he liked to be touched. “You can watch all the porn you want then, Morty, and no one will know. Or better yet, I’ll soundproof your room. Then we can watch it together, Morty.” He smirked at her and she blushed, her eyes cut between his face and his bigger hand wrapped around hers. “We can try out all the stuff you like, make our own fucking porno…”

Morty swallowed heavily and he watched her legs press together.

He eased his palm away and let her take over, her strokes firmer and more sure even as he started petting at the long strands of her hair brushing against his bare hip. She shot him another timid look before ducking down and licking a stripe up the bottom side of his dick. Rick gasped, slamming his head back against the wall again and letting his eyes slip closed.

They popped back open when he felt her soft lips press against the tip and he realized he didn’t want to miss the show, grateful he’d decided to watch when her tongue flicked over the slit and circled the head. She was looking up at him with wide appraising eyes and that weird bottomless stomach feeling hit him full force again.

Before he even really knew what he was doing, he was pulling her off him and sitting up, searching the floor for his lab-coat. He found it dangling off the bottom of the cot and was fist deep in the pocket before Morty even stammered out a confused, “R-Rick?” By the time she’d scrambled up to her knees he was turning back to her, brandishing the small gold electronic key.

Her look of panic morphed into hopeful excitement and she visibly held her hand back from snatching the key out from between his fingers.

“Did you learn your lesson, Morty,” he growled, shuffling towards her on his knees.

She nodded obediently. “Yes, Rick.”

“We don’t need to use the ring gag this time, do we Morty?” he threatened, gripping her shoulders and speaking seriously down to her.

She tucked her arms behind her back and the possessive monster inside of Rick coiled tightly around his heart. “No, Rick,” she promised, her eyes blown black.

He growled as he leaned into her, her small breasts pressing against his ribs as he leaned down to whisper in her ear, “Who do you belong to, Morty?”

He steadied her when she shivered so hard she almost lost her balance. “You, Rick,” she answered, turning her face to run her nose along his chin.

He bit at the junction of her shoulder and her neck, sucking the skin between his lips, desperate to re-mark the bruise that had been erased by the healing serum. His hands traced down her waist following the warm metal bands to their junction and feeling for the hexagonal indent in the otherwise smooth gold surface. He pressed the flat end of the key to the pad and the sharp click of the buckles releasing echoed in the silence. Morty breathed a shaky sigh against his ear when Rick peeled the metal from her body, the skin beneath sticky with sweat.

“Come – come on, Morty, come here,” he urged her, laying back on the cot and guiding her knees
up his body. She tensed a moment when he dragged her on top of him, facing away from his head, but peered down the length of her body as he shimmied lower until his face was between her knees. She turned to glance over her shoulder and catch his gaze, the shock clear in her wide eyes.

“Rick, what-” she half-laughed, trying to pull away before his hands on her hips stopped her short. He lifted his head to lick a wide stripe along her slit and she whimpered, the sound muffled behind her hand.

“Sit on my face, Morty,” he demanded and Morty choked on her inhale as he slid his hands up her thighs, spreading her ass cheeks and prodding at the base of the plug still nestled inside of her.

“Holy shit,” she whimpered, her legs already shaking.

“Come on, buddy, spread your knees…” with his guidance, she lowered herself until his mouth was buried in the folds of her cunt. She tasted like metal and arousal and Morty and Rick groaned against her skin.

When he gave the faintest tug to the plug nearly pressing against his nose, she toppled forward, catching herself on his hips and digging her nails into his thighs. The sting made Rick thrust on instinct and he could mark the moment she understood his intentions by the hot rush of breath she huffed onto the tip of his cock.

A moment later she was sucking at the head, steadying herself with a hand wrapped around the base as she tongued at the glans. Rick licked sloppily at her entrance, prodding into her in shallow thrusts while he ran his hands over the globe of her ass and along her sides, wrapping one arm around her waist and holding her against him, her stomach to his ribs, as she started grinding down onto his face.

Rick moaned when she finally slid her lips down the length of his shaft. The hot cavern of her mouth enveloped him, and after a few gentle, insecure bobs, she pressed her tongue to him and sucked. Now that was something she hadn’t been able to do with the ring gag in and the hard jerk his hips made in her direction startled a grunt out of her as his cock nudged at the back of her throat. She took it in stride, wrapping her fingers around the part of his dick that she couldn’t swallow and pumping it in time with her bobbing.

When she tentatively cupped his balls with her other hand, rolling them gently – almost curiously – in the palm of her hand, Rick plunged his tongue into her as deeply as he could reach, arm tightening around her until she was plastered to his heaving chest.

She matched the pace his hips were trying to set, picking up speed and slurping noisily at his cock until he shifted his tongue lower and lapped at the swollen bud that was her clitoris. The gut deep moan that Morty rumbled around his dick nearly set him off, and desperate not to finish before her, he sank two fingers into her hot flesh. He could feel the hard press of the butt plug from inside of her and the idea that she belonged to him, that in that moment he had control over every one of her orifices, that he was penetrating every part of her, fueled the explosion of his orgasm, taking him unawares.

Morty seemed equally surprised but she didn’t pull away, couldn’t pull away with his arm wrapped around her waist and his hips curling after her retreat. She swallowed around his cock, the feeling indescribable and bordering on too much as the last spurts of his release filled her mouth. She stilled, his twitching, softening member still throbbing against her tongue and Rick slid his hand through the cleft of her ass, slippery fingers grabbing hold of the base of the butt plug and easing it out, the fingers inside her cunt burying themselves deeper, his tongue softly prodding her clit.

When the fat bulb of the plug slipped past her sphincter, the contracting muscles expelling it in a
firm, inadvertent push, she came, groaning and trembling, her thighs clenching around his ears.

Rick rode her out, slowing his licks to languid strokes, his fingers shallowly thrusting until she keened at the overstimulation. She released his dick with a noisy pop and a breathy chuckle that Rick returned as she rolled off of him and flopped into the small bit of space between Rick’s body and the wall.

They panted together, one of her thighs still pressed against his head. He wiped at his mouth, the smell of her still clinging to his face and threatening to liven up his overspent cock. He glanced down his body to catch sight of her face, suddenly distractingly curious about what her thoughts were on what had just happened.

Her cheek was resting on the prominent curve of his hip bone, her eyes a little glassy and distant until she caught him watching her and she blushed. Rick was never going to get over that blush.

She glanced around the room, taking in the paneled walls, the door with the palm-coded key, and the grated ceilings while Rick watched the way her thoughts flickered across her face. After a few moments of peaceful silence Morty asked, “Where are we anyways?” and Rick burst into uncontrollable, gut deep laughter that threatened to buck her off his hip.

She sat up and frowned, visibly torn between not seeing the joke but wanting to be in on it and Rick wiped a stray tear from the corner of his eye. “Oh Morty, please tell me that just now was the first time you asked yourself that question,” he said breathily, still chuckling.

She blushed and yanked the blanket from underneath Rick’s butt, covering herself up with it as best she could when it was still tangled around his legs. She shrugged. “I guess I did yesterday – when we got here but then I got distracted,” she accentuated pointedly and scowled when that released a whole new wave of laughter.

Rick couldn’t resist the urge to tug her into his chest and press a quick kiss to the top of her hair. “You are fucking hopeless, Morty,” he rubbed his nose against the top of her head and tried to contain his smile.

“What, and if I’d asked yesterday, you – would you have given me an answer?” she grumbled but Rick didn’t miss the way she leaned into his hold, sneaking one arm out to wrap around his back. Oh, they were hugging. Rick didn’t usually do hugs and the realization took him by surprise. He thought about casting her away but decided that the feeling of her other scrawny arm wrapping around his middle while her cheek rested against the space over his cybernetic heart wasn’t the worst feeling in the world. And Morty probably needed this sort of physical reassurance. He’d do it to keep her quiet.

“Ah, you got me, Moooooorty,” he sing-songed, dropping one more peck into her hair.

“Well, wherever we are, is there a - a bathroom somewhere?” She pulled away from him and Rick was reminded that the comforting heat he’d adjusted to all night wasn’t his own. “I’ve got to pee so bad, I’m just about to bust, Rick.”

Rick nodded and rolled to his feet, fastening his pants closed and swiping the lump of his sweater off the ground and untangling his tank top from inside it. “Yeah, yeah. I’ll take you home, buddy, just let me get dressed.”

She impatiently watched him don his three layers and tie on his shoes, shifting her weight foot to foot while he swiveled the dial on the portal gun to her home dimension. With a quick look at Morty; tussle-haired and shining-skinned and nude except for the blanket she’d wrapped around her like a
cloak, Rick spun a little further than the usual coordinates that deposited them in his garage and adjusted for the Moscovium interference.

After he’d tucked the newfound tequila bottle into his pocket, he shot a portal at the bunk’s door and Morty was the first to slip into it. Stepping through into the Smith family bathroom, he belatedly realized it was a good thing no one had been in there.

“Knock yourself out, Morty,” he chuckled, and let himself out of the room only to come face to face with Jerry on the other side of the door, a newspaper clutched in one hand, the other outstretched for the door knob. “Ah, sorry Jerry, el baño está ocupado,” he crowed, twisting the doorknob behind his back and listening to the latch catch.

“Wha – by who?” Jerry demanded, jerking as if he thought he might slip past Rick’s side and sneak inside.

“Morty, obviously,” Rick answered, stepping into Jerry’s space until the smaller man shifted to let Rick pass.

“Rick! It’s a school day! Did you have her out all night? What were you doing with her, huh? And why is she in there?” he demanded, gesturing to the door. The toilet flushed with perfect timing and Rick raised half his eyebrow at Jerry’s flushed face. The front door slammed open and Rick snuck a quick glance down to his watch. He couldn’t have orchestrated more perfect timing if he had a way to travel back in time.

“You really need me to explain to you what Morty might be doing in a bathroom, Jerry?” Rick said, purposely loud. The muffled thump of a backpack hitting the ground in the foyer echoes up the stairs and something like serendipitous euphoria made the air in Rick’s lungs weightless.

“I think I’d better check on her,” Jerry asserted, trying to shoulder past Rick who held his ground like a tree rooted in soil.

“Now you’re trying to peep on her?” Rick asked, his offended voice carrying. The sound of the shower starting to run filtered through the door as Jerry blanched. Rushed footfalls pounded up the stairs.

“What? No! I just-” Rick pulled the tequila from his pocket and closed his eyes as he took a long gulp, letting Jerry wrap his hand around the doorknob. Summer’s bright and furious face crested the landing, intelligent eyes raking over the scene at hand.

“Dad, what the hell?!” she demanded, right as Jerry twisted the knob and the door swung open to reveal Morty halfway into the shower, butt-naked, and eyes deer-in-the-headlights wide.

“Wha – guys!” she shouted, alarmed to find so many people gaping at her. Rick hid his interested smirk behind the lip of the tequila bottle as he took another sip and struggled not to laugh. Morty yanked at the shower curtain to cover herself up, slipping in her urgency to get into the tub, and slammed to the porcelain in a tangle of gangly limbs and long hair. “GAH!”

“Morty!” Jerry cried and tried to enter the bathroom, only to find himself barricaded by Rick and Summer – who was radiating anger with the pulse of a sub-woofer.

“Dad, get out of here!” Summer demanded, shooting Rick a pointed look as she backed into the bathroom, shoving at the door and using the wood to leverage Jerry out of the room. Rick sidestepped automatically.

“But Morty - is she okay?” Jerry asked the closing door, bewildered. “I just want to help…”
“I’m – I’m okay,” Morty’s voice - very embarrassed sounding to Rick’s practiced ear - intoned meekly from inside.

“She’s fine dad, now go away!” Summer shouted, slamming the door with one last heave, the lock loudly snicking closed. Rick cocked half his eyebrow at Jerry who turned to scowl furiously at the older man.

“I’m watching you, Rick,” he asserted, his cheeks still flushed and his pointer-finger extended into Rick’s face. He was crowding pretty close and Rick was all too aware that his face probably smelled like Morty’s cunt, some of the slobber on his lower lip still evidence of the morning’s activities. Jerry’s eyes darted around his face and he did linger on the slick of Rick’s chin, his expression crumpling into something suspicious. “Something’s going on,” he muttered as he backed away into his room. “And I’m going to find out what it is.”

Rick glowered at Jerry until the man folded in on himself. “Good luck with that,” he acknowledged darkly and Jerry retreated into his bedroom, eyes uneasy. Rick glared at the doorway and exhaled a long breath out of his nose.

Behind the bathroom door, Summer murmured to Morty, “Are you okay in there? You didn’t, like, break anything, did you?”

“No, I’m – really Summer I’m okay,” Morty answered, her voice barely audible over the drone of the shower.

“Okay good. I thought only old people slipped in the shower,” Summer snarked back and Morty’s awkward laugh filtered through the door. “Oh my god, you won’t believe what Jeremy said to me at school today…”

Rick’s frown softened as he sauntered down the stairs. Summer was a good kid. Proactive. Decisive. Emotionally intelligent. Rick briefly wondered how the Summer from τ-314 had turned out – whether she was as confident and quick witted as this one or whether that was only possible because she had to be with such flaky parents around. He hadn’t seen his Summer since Beth had moved out of the small two-bedroom apartment he’d kept for them while Beth meticulously worked her way through medical school. Summer had been a toddler then, her hair had been more a warm gold than full on red, and she (like her mother) had called him by his first name – or at least the toddler equivalent of it: inadvertently dropping the R to sound more like a noise of disgust than a name.

The last time he’d seen his Beth, he had heard Summer puttering around in the room behind his daughter but he hadn’t been invited inside and he hadn’t really cared to press the matter; he still saw the young girl as the unwanted child Beth was forced to bear as the unfortunate successor of Jerry’s genes.

Now, knowing what he knew about this Summer and her sick burns and the fuck-you-all attitude that somehow didn’t completely make her an intolerable bitch, Rick admitted to himself that he might have missed out on an opportunity.

Luckily Rick wasn’t the type to live in regret. Besides, he had a new Summer now and he suspected she was the superior model, anyways.

But despite the fact that Rick had managed to warm up to his grand-children, Jerry still wasn’t off the hook. In fact, Jerry’s offspring might be his only worthwhile contributions to the world and that was more in spite of him than anything else. Rick drank deeply from the tequila bottle and swung open the door to his garage.
No more screwing around: it was time for Jerry to go. Rick had put up with him for more than a year – longer than he had ever imagined he’d be able to tolerate – but it was time for Rick to take his place as the one true patriarch of the family. No more ignorant ribbing over the dinner table. No more incessant complaints. No more tactless suspicions.

This was Rick’s home now. And Jerry was no longer welcome.

Rick whistled as he slid down the ladder to the bunker. Jerry-bot was waiting for him there, fully prepped for the task at hand, slumped against the edge of his locker and dressed in Jerry’s favorite getup – the very same outfit Jerry was wearing at the moment – a fortuitous detail Rick didn’t fail to notice. Rick booted him up and the robot jerked to life, unfolding himself from the charging bay and stepping up to Rick. The Jerry-bot glanced over his shoulder, sweeping his eyes along the seemingly sleeping bodies of his family and Rick caught the way his eyes lingered almost hungrily on Morty-bot. Well, at least the programming worked. Rick keyed the panel closed and the cabinet melted back into the wall, accessible only to himself.

“Hey Rick,” the robot said amiably in Jerry’s voice, his eyes following Rick’s movement. “I await your command.” It was strangely refreshing to hear Jerry so willing to serve Rick – even if it was the basic principle behind all the robot-family member’s code.

Rick took a long pull from the tequila bottle and bent his neck until it cracked, staring down his nose at his son-in-law’s doppelganger. He swallowed another mouthful, the burn of the alcohol traceable all the way down his throat, before he turned to the larger computer terminal he kept in the bunker. He slid a small disk into a waiting port and tapped a few commands into his keyboard. “We’ll start with a kidnapping and replacement mission,” Rick finally announced decisively before he burped loudly.

A sizzle/zap sounded from the port and the small disk popped out of the slot like bread from a toaster. The previously transparent center swirled green. “Hit the button and throw it at the target.” Rick tossed the one-off portal transporter to Jerry-bot who caught it effortlessly and Rick was infinitely grateful that even with all of Jerry’s stupidity installed into it, the machine still kept its basic abilities to follow orders and function accurately. When he’d installed Jerry’s pathetic personality into the CPU, he’d half expected Jerry’s idiocy to gum down its programming.

“Stay down here until I give you the order,” he continued, watching the robot’s eyes dart between his the same way Jerry’s did when he listened to Rick tell a story over the dinner table. “Once you’ve replaced Jerry, initiate ‘Basic Jerry-Protocol R-34: Daily Life and Habits’ while awaiting further command.”


“And you know what, let’s be safe,” Rick murmured to himself before stating clearly, “Master Override; voice key Rick Tau Three-One-Four.”

“Master Override initiated,” Jerry-bot replied, his eyes going vacant and flickering with code.

“Unless explicitly commanded, stay away from human Morty.”

“Initiating ‘stay away from Morty’,” Jerry-bot intoned his eyelids fluttering and artificial life blinking back into his eyes. “You got it.”

“Pe-uuuuuug-rect.” Rick took another long drag from the bottle and scoffed, raking his eyes over the Jerry-bot one last time before he climbed back up the ladder.
Amongst the familiar ozone/oil tang of the garage, Rick was struck by how strongly his sweater still smelled like the burning Citadel and his face still smelled like Morty’s sex. He padded back to his room for a change of clothes and then up the stairs for a shower, the muffled voices of Morty and Summer filtering through the wall from Morty’s bedroom. Half-distractedly, he monitored their exchange through the cameras set up in Morty’s room with his cybernetic eye as he scrubbed himself clean.

Despite Morty’s improved behavior, he couldn’t be sure she wouldn’t try to confide in her sister. He didn’t really think she was dumb enough to let something slip but then again, her idiocy was always finding surprising new lows. However it quickly became clear that the girl’s conversation was centered on innocent topics: the new clothes Summer had bought for Morty, Summer’s most recent fling, and Jessica – of fucking course. Morty was always talking about her.

Miraculously Morty didn’t seem anxious or uncomfortable. Her body language didn’t scream ‘I have a secret’ like it so frequently did when she was trying to keep something quiet. She looked comfortable and relaxed – if slightly baffled and a little reverent that Summer was gently brushing out her hair and nicely explaining how to apply mascara.

Rick left them to their bonding, some strange bubble of fondness rising from his guts. He burped, half-hoping that would alleviate the feeling but it didn’t. When he turned off the shower, he reached for the tequila he’d left on the toilet cistern before he snatched up a towel.

He did some mindless tinkering at his bedroom computer while he finished the rest of the bottle. His first task had been an altercation to his home monitoring system; a fail-safe set to alert him if Morty couldn’t keep her mouth shut. He’d get the notification on his watch and once he rebuilt his memory wiper, it would be quick work for him to do a little creative erasing if her lips loosened.

Not that he was counting on that. There was something in her fathomless brown eyes that morning that had seemed different. Gratified. Or maybe even a little infatuated. She’d always looked at him with something bordering devotion but that morning there had been a new brightness to that spark. Something huge and cavernous that should have horrified Rick but now, coming from Morty, it felt right. That was how she should feel about him. He was the center of her fucking universe after all.

And he’d be lying if he said those sorts of misplaced feelings wouldn’t work to his advantage.

Beth knocked on his door for dinner and he rose a little unsteadily. She’d picked up Thai on her way home, the bags under her eyes telling Rick she hadn’t gotten much sleep the night before but as usual, she didn’t ask him where he’d gone with her daughter all night or what they had been doing.

She called the family down from upstairs and Rick wasn’t surprised to see Summer and Morty crash down the stairs giggling together, Morty’s eyes extra-wide looking rimmed with black liner and mascara. It did pique Beth’s interest enough to startle her out of her mental haze and she tipped her very full wine glass in their direction.

“Morty, is that a skirt?” she asked, voice pitched in disbelief. And sure enough, Morty was wearing a skirt. The same blue as most of her pants but high-waisted, pleated, and short. Very short. Rick had never thought Morty – who always seemed shrimpy and short in comparison to him – would have been hiding long legs under all her jeans, but the skirt made him appreciate otherwise. Her customary yellow shirt was tucked into the waistband and Rick was impressed with Summer’s choice. It wasn’t overly impractical nor out of the range of Morty’s casual-bordering-on-indifferent style, but when she hopped off the last step the pleats ruffled around her thighs and the small smile warming her face belied her pleasure.

“Summer got it for me!” Morty mumbled happily, her cheeks flushed and her face turned to the
carpet. Rick made eye contact with his oldest granddaughter, casting her a subtle approving nod that she cocked an eyebrow at and smirked.

“That’s nice of you, Summer,” Beth conceded while Morty rushed to the kitchen, Rick following sedately behind.

Summer scoffed. “Someone’s got to look out for her,” she returned pointedly and Rick chanced a glance over his shoulder to catch Beth’s narrow-eyed, speculative look before he turned the corner into the kitchen.

Morty was gathering a stack of dishes from the cabinets and she startled a little when Rick sauntered in, her shoulders stiffening as he surveyed her from where he leaned his hip against the counter and crossed his arms. “Ne-uuuh-w look?” he asked, half his eyebrow quirking up.

She looked up at him through her eyelashes, and shrugged a little. “I dunno. Wh - what do you think?” she asked, her cheeks tinging pink.

“It’s cute,” he slurred a bit, a half-second later marveling that the word had come out of his mouth. Cute? Since when did he even think the word ‘cute’? Then again, it had been a while since he’d had tequila and it did tend to make him affectionate; one of the reasons it wasn’t necessarily his liquor of choice. He shrugged and tried to take another sip before he realized he was holding an empty bottle.

But Morty fucking glowed under the praise; teeth sinking into her lower lip while her fingers toyed with the pleated hem of her skirt. The high waistband emphasized how thin she was – jeezus had she always been that thin? – and he only resisted the urge to wrap his hands around her to see if his fingers could meet because he heard Jerry’s loud footsteps pound down the stairs.

Morty shot him a heated look before disappearing out of the kitchen with the plates. Rick tossed the tequila bottle into the recycling, the glass clattering against the collection of wine bottles already half-filling the bin.

“Morty! Don’t you look pretty,” Jerry gushed and Rick sauntered into the dining room, resplendent in the tension vibrating through the air. Summer was shooting Jerry a dirty look while Beth sipped at her wine tight-lipped, Morty stood stiff as a board while her father caught up one of her hands and led her into a spin that kicked her skirt up high enough to nearly reveal her panties.

“Th-Thanks dad,” she mumbled, tugging her hand back like he’d burned her and scurrying to her seat. Jerry laughed a little bemusedly before he glanced between his stoic wife and daughter, both glaring daggers at him like they could peel his skin off with the power of a look.

“What?” he asked defensively, pulling out his chair and sorting through the plastic containers of take-out. “Can’t I comment on my daughter’s changing body?”

“No, dad, you really can’t,” Summer spat, glaring at him as she leaned as far away from him as her seat allowed.

Jerry, seemingly unphased, cracked open a box of noodles and started spooning some onto his plate, dripping sauce onto the table. “You’re growing up so fast, Morty. I remember when you were small enough that I could lift you over my head!” He gave Morty a noticeable up-and-down scan that Morty instinctively cringed away from. “Then again, maybe I still could.” He pushed the noodles in her direction. “You’ve gotta get some junk in that trunk, girl!” he continued in his pseudo-street voice.

“Jerry!” Beth admonished, setting her glass down unsteadily enough that wine slopped over the lip.
She braced herself with a fist on the table and visibly struggled to soften her voice when she turned to Morty. “Help yourself, sweetie. I got your favorite: Thai.”

Morty shot a quick glance to Summer – who loudly and notoriously hated Morty’s preference – but Summer only shot her a quick smile and rifled in the brown paper bag.

“Oh,” Morty said a little breathless. She wasn’t used to getting the things she liked, Rick knew that for a fact. She was the lowest on the family totem pole and except for when Rick was in the mood to spoil her, she was resigned to never really getting noticed let alone be treated to her favorites.

“Thanks mom…” she continued a little shakily, grabbing a container of curry and spooning some onto her plate with nearly every set of eyes on her.

Rick burped loudly and started in on some skewers, kicking his chair out with his ankle and sinking into it heavily.

“So Morty,” Jerry broke the silence, shooting a glare at Rick. “What were you and Rick doing out all night?”

Morty choked on her first bite of rice and Rick thumped her on the back, frowning at Jerry with a carefully inquisitive pinch to the corner of his eyes.

Beth caught his skeptical look and mirrored it back. “Jerry, how do you even know they were out all night?” Beth jumped to Rick’s defense and he barely hid a smirk. Since he’d moved in and openly labeled Morty his little sidekick, the activities of their adventures were a carefully avoided topic; Beth too determined to find no fault with her long-absent father and maybe a little too trusting of his abilities to care for her youngest daughter – or perhaps a little apathetic about Morty’s general health and well-being all together. Summer didn’t care enough to ask (and had been on enough adventures to get the gist of things anyways) and Jerry usually abstained from asking prying questions out of a desire to keep Beth happy.

Now he was compromising the whole carefully balanced system.

“I checked!” Jerry answered, triumphant and defensive while he threw a sneer in Rick’s direction.

“You checked?” Beth repeated, confused. “Why were you checking on Morty in the middle of the night, Jerry?”

“That’s – that’s beside the point,” he stammered, and Summer turned a hot, indignant look to her father. “This is the second time this week you had her out all night and as her father, I demand to know why.”

“We – we were on an adventure, Dad,” Morty answered placating, her voice level if a little confused as she shot looks around the table to try to understand the strange new tension. Rick threw an arm over her shoulder and she glanced to him, eyes big and boring into him. He felt his lips lift into something like a smile, his chest expanding with a long breath. “I was with Rick.” She said it with the same tone she might have said, ‘I was totally safe,’ or ‘where else would I be,’ and Rick chuckled a little to himself, ruffling her hair and relishing the half-hearted way she swatted his hand away.

“Yeah, that’s what I don’t like about it,” Jerry said flatly.

“Since when do you care?” Summer jumped to Morty’s defense and Jerry looked startled by the vehemence in her voice.

“I don’t need to explain myself,” he sniffed, clearly alarmed to find himself facing the firing squad when his goal had been to throw Rick to the wolves. “If I go looking for my teenage daughter in the
middle of the night, I should find her in her bed.”

Beth looked vaguely nauseated and Summer’s jaw dropped into a gape. Jerry, completely oblivious, crossed his arms with the confidence of a chess master pronouncing ‘checkmate.’ His certainty flagged when Beth pushed away from the table, her chair squealing against the floor.

“Beth, honey, are you okay?” he asked, following her into the kitchen and bleeding a trail of confusion and insecurity in his wake.

Rick rolled his eyes to Morty who looked utterly baffled even as she stuffed a forkful of noodles into her mouth. “I’m putting a lock on your door, Morty,” he told her flatly and Summer closed her mouth and tightened her jaw. Her eyes blazed when they met Rick’s and she titled him a little nod.

“Uh – okay,” Morty mumbled around her bite. “Why?”

Chapter End Notes

I had no idea I'd be writing so many home-life scenes when I started this...
Chapter Eleven

Rick could feel Morty’s eyes on the back of his head as he installed the new doorknob, his thoughts distant as he kneeled in her doorway and drilled the thick corresponding latch into the frame. He glanced over his shoulder to find her perched on the edge of her bed, her legs crossed underneath her, the space between her thighs a dark cavern below the short skirt.

He smirked when he caught her staring at him, her jittery fingers clenched in her bedspread, her gaze dropping to the floor. He’d destroy a whole solar system to know what she’d been thinking. “I promised you I’d sound proof your room,” he said to her instead, nodding to the red box already screwed into the wall, the button for it lining up neatly next to her light switch. She squirmed under his hot look, her thighs tensing, and Rick couldn’t suppress a wicked grin. “And this new doorknob will only open to my palm print and yours.”

“Yours too?” she scoffed, less a question than a fatalistic observation.

“You couldn’t lock me out anyways, Morty.” He waggled his unibrow and she rolled her eyes. “I’ve still got my portal gun.”

She breathed out heavily through her nose. “The illusion might’ve been nice,” she sighed and Rick shook his head and turned back to his work, running the back of his hand over his bottom lip. “Why live a lie?” he shrugged and Morty hummed out a neutral noise behind him.

He worked quietly for a few minutes, the silence companionable as Morty watched him remove her old doorknob and slot the new one in place. The weight of her eyes on him was steadying, comforting, almost empowering and he silently marveled at how quickly he’d adapted to her near-constant presence.

Rick didn’t even realize he’d cleared his scratchy throat until Morty’s bare feet padded across the carpeting and stopped at his side, the mostly empty bottle of whiskey he’d found under her bed (where he’d assumedly dropped it in some blackout god-knows-when) proffered in her outstretched hand. He ruffled her hair and took a swig.

“What do you think – what was the deal with everyone at dinner?” she wondered quietly, almost to herself, frowning at her toes before flashing her eyes up to meet his.

“Do-o0o0ough-n’t know what you’re talking about, Morty,” he replied, shifting his weight to his other knee and aligning a long screw through the metal hole below the knob. It had been wishful thinking when he’d banked on her being too oblivious to see the new tension even if she wasn’t known for her observational skills. The Smiths weren’t exactly being subtle and Morty would have to be brain dead not to notice Beth’s increased drinking, Summer’s new overprotectiveness, and Jerry’s shrewd skepticism.

The bed springs creaked as she sat back down and Rick breathed a steady sigh out his nose. “Everybody’s acting weird,” she oh-so-concisely explained and Rick didn’t have to turn around to guess she was pouting.

“I wouldn’t know. I don’t waste my time caring about that sort of shit,” Rick replied, tightening the screw until the wood creaked below his hands. “And you shouldn’t either, Mo-o0ouh-tty.”

“Yeah but, like,” - Morty sighed - “Summer’s being nice.” She said it like the idea was a complicated calculus equation. “Like, weird nice. And Mom is…” Rick glanced over his shoulder and caught the
tail end of the frown Morty was shooting at the floor. “Mom is being weird too. Half the time she can’t remember my birthday let alone my favorite food.” Morty was onto something there; Beth hadn’t known what meal would most appease her youngest daughter. She’d texted Rick and asked.

“Isn’t that a go-oough-od thing?” Rick said flatly, standing up from his crouch and surveying his handiwork. “It’s best to sit back and enjoy the brief moments of unearned happiness, Morty, they’re generally few and far between.”

He gave the new doorknob a jiggle. It looked about the same as her old one: brass, round, and unremarkable. He closed the door and a quiet little humming click was the only noticeable difference when the latch caught. He leaned against the doorframe and drank deeply from the bottle of whiskey, watching Morty worry an uneven curl around her finger.

“You’re probably right, Rick.” Her face was a little pale when she frowned thoughtfully. “Dad’s been… pushier than normal though,” she observed, slanting worried eyes up to him, a little crease forming between her eyebrows. “You think he – he couldn’t know anything… right Rick?”

He flipped the switch on the sound barrier, a red pulse slithering over her walls as the low humming drone cut off the muffled sounds of the television downstairs and the chirping crickets outside Morty’s window. Morty’s bottom lip quivered, her cheekbones flushing a soft pink as Rick stalked the three steps over to her bed and brushed the bangs away from her wide, glassy eyes.

“If Jerry did find out, we’d have a problem Mooooorty,” he said darkly, sitting down next to her on the edge of the bed. She was slight enough that maneuvering her onto his lap - pressing her down until her stomach was across his legs, her wiggling ass displayed tantalizingly below him - barely took any of his strength. He locked an arm around her waist to keep her still but she stopped resisting him the moment he flipped her short skirt up to reveal white cotton panties.

“Rick?” she breathed out, her voice high with anxiety but pitched with something Rick was starting to recognize as excitement.

He kneaded the globes of her ass firmly in his hands, his fingers sneaking below the lace hem to better grope her. Morty leveraged into the massage with her knees and Rick suppressed a chuckle. Things were coming together so nicely. “What do you think people would do if they knew you were such a mess for me, Morty?” His hand slid lower, pressing against her down until her stomach was across his legs, her wigging ass displayed tantalizingly below him - barely took any of his strength. He locked an arm around her waist to keep her still but she stopped resisting him the moment he flipped her short skirt up to reveal white cotton panties.

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She struggled against his hold, a hurt little noise transforming into a gasp when he smoothed his fingers down her clothed folds, circling the fabric over her clit with unrelenting pressure.

“Do you think Beth would blame me for this, Morty?” He caught her teary eyes peering at him over her shoulder and he felt sparks light up his amygdala. Her dilated pupils were swirling with liquid fire and naked fear and Rick felt powerful. In control. He rolled his hips, grinding his suddenly fierce erection against Morty’s thigh. “Do you think Beth and Jerry could still look at you the same way; still love you the same way if they knew what a little pervert you are? If they knew how much you fucking love when I get you off?”

Morty whimpered but pressed harder into his hand, guiding his lazy fingers to the damp fabric over her entrance by shifting her hips.

“Should we test out that sound barrier, Morty?” Rick taunted and Morty had barely stammered a confused series of syllables before he drew back his hand and landed a solid spank across her right butt cheek.
She jolted away from the blow reflexively but Rick held her in place, chuckling at the surprised squawk he’d startled out of her. He rubbed the red mark gently, a welt the shape of his hand blossoming over her pale skin.

“Rick!?” she yelped, struggling in his hold when he landed another solid swat to the same pink flesh. “Jeez, a – a little warning, please!”

“You’re – you’re a little freak, just like me, Morty,” he hissed between his teeth, pressing harder on her back when she tried to turn over in his hold. “No one else’ll be able to understand you. They’ll think you’re sick,” she glared at him over her shoulder but her angry bluster was a thin veil disguising a deep pit of insecurity. He landed another resounding swat on the same spot, Morty’s noise of pain and alarm shooting straight to his throbbing dick. “But not me, Morty. I – I understand you. I know what you need,” he emphasized his point by smoothing his palm over her searing flesh. “Everyone else, if they knew how wet you got when your old grandpa bent you over his knee,” he dragged his fingers over the damp fabric and Morty keened, “they’d freak out, Morty.”

“Rick,” she whimpered, “you piece of sh-IIT!!!” Her voice tilted up when he landed another blow, this time to her other cheek.

Rick laughed heartily at that. “Had to even it out, buddy,” he chuckled, soothing the red skin with gentle strokes of his hand. “Plus side is the sound barrier must be working.” If it wasn’t, her startled shrieking would have the whole household pounding down her door by now with how on edge everyone was.

He gentled his touch, cupping her hot skin in his palm and glancing back to her face. She was crying, her lips trembling in a pout, and Rick felt the bite of something almost like regret. “Shhh shh shh, come here baby,” he soothed, pulling her up into his arms, cradling her against his chest, carefully slotting her sore bottom between his spread legs to give it a rest. “Don’t worry, Morty, I’m right here. I’ve – I’ve got you.”

She scoffed a little and wiped her nose on his lab coat. “You’re drunk,” she murmured pitifully against his shoulder. “And being mean.”

He ignored the comment entirely, his hands soothing long strokes down her back and petting at her hair. “You’re – you’re grandpa’s special girl, Morty.” She sighed out a long note and reluctantly wrapped her arms around his torso, tucking her head under his chin. “Made just for me.”

The arms around him squeezed and Rick hid his grin in her hair.

It was later that evening, when Rick was settled into the couch with his almost empty bottle of whiskey watching House Hunters with a nearly belligerently drunk Beth, that Summer barged into the room. “Grandpa Rick!” she blurted urgently, clasping a hand over his forearm where it rested on the armrest. “Grandpa Rick you have to see this!”

Rick was happy something would finally interrupt his daughter’s nearly twenty minute rant on the minutia of horse heart surgery. He could only hear her call horses ‘living metaphors for freedom’ so
many times before he’d chew off his own mechanical arm to get away.

“Su – Summer, what’s – whereasss the fire?” Beth slurred, leaning heavily onto Rick’s arm for the fiftieth time in the hour. The antiseptic smell of the horse hospital still clung to her hair and clothes. She usually changed after work but that night she’d beeline to the kitchen to pour a glass of wine before she even set down the bag of takeout. It was reassuring, in a way; at least she wasn’t totally unmoved by the situation surrounding her youngest daughter, but he’d prefer it if she spent less time rambling at Rick and more time condemning Jerry.

“Wha – Mom, are you drunk?” Summer demanded, her tone lifting in outrage.

“As a –uuuuurp- skunk, Summer,” Rick answered, kicking his legs up onto the coffee table and tilting his head back to catch her eye.

“Yeah,” Summer bit back, crossing her arms and glaring down her nose at him. “And you aren’t much better.” He didn’t love the condescending tone and he opened his mouth to tell her as much but Beth beat him to the punch.

“So wh-aauuuuh-at, we’re adults Summer. We can take care of ourssshelves,” she snapped and except for the slur, it may as well have been the Beth from his dimension for all the self-important malice in her tone.

“Yeah, and what about Morty?” Summer demanded furiously, scorching eyes glaring at Beth. “Who’s gonna take care of her?”

Rick’s focus snapped to attention. Oh. Oh yes. He kept his eyes carefully glued to the TV when he said, “She’s safe upstairs in her room.” He’d left her up there about an hour ago and had intermittently checked in on her via his surveillance camera, mostly because not too long after he left she started masturbating and watching her do that was more interesting than what Beth had to say about horses. Especially when he was fairly sure he caught the mumbled groan of his name a couple times in the mix. “Why?”

“Because I just found these in Dad’s secret hiding spot,” she announced, dramatically tossing a stack of photos onto the coffee table. With how eventful the last couple days had been, Rick felt like he’d planted them there a lifetime ago so the surge of pleasure was unexpectedly satisfying.

The impressive collection of risqué Morty photos fanned out across the wood and painted a horrifying tale. Rick’s eyes inadvertently settled on the one he’d taken himself just a few days earlier – a close-up shot of his cum dripping down the folds of Morty’s sex. Side by side with a picture taken from Rick’s cybernetic eye - a wide shot of Morty in the field outside her high school dressed in shorts and the required jersey for gym class, her shoulders curved in on themselves as she looked longingly at a nearby group of girls – the spread was more than bleak. It was grotesque. Rick’s chest expanded with gratification until his lungs were fit to burst.

Beth gracelessly slid of the couch to her knees, the tips of her shaking fingers prodding at the same two pictures Rick had zeroed in on before she scrambled to her feet, barely making it to the kitchen sink in time to puke all over the plates still dirty from dinner.

Rick breathed out a long heavy sigh and struggled to keep the smirk from his lips. Finally. Finally.

Summer crossed her arms and taped her foot while she glared pointedly at the ceiling, her eyes leaking a steady stream of tears. Rick turned back to the pictures (Morty’s thin ass in too-short shorts, her bare breasts as she pulled her shirt over her head, a clear shot down her pajama top while she bent over) and collected them into a pile with the photo of her in gym class on top - just to keep Beth
on point - then he rubbed his hands over his face and settled a palm over his mouth, his attention
drifting to the feed from his surveillance camera.

Alone in her room upstairs, Morty panted, her hand working under her panties, her skirt pooled
around her stomach. Rick’s cybernetic heart fought the chemical reactions in his blood determined to
make his pulse race. If things got any better, he was likely to bust a nut right there in his khakis.
Because this – watching the artistry of his manipulation fall into place like a well-orchestrated
symphony – was his favorite aphrodisiac.

After Beth finished rinsing out her mouth, the swishing, gargling noise the only sound besides the
low hum of voices on the TV and Summer’s occasional sniffing, she stumbled back to the couch.
One look and Rick could tell she wasn’t much closer to sober but the insistent rambling was a long
distant memory.

As Beth’s weight settled back into the couch, Summer finally broke the spell by asking, “What are
we going to do?” her voice thick and unrelenting. Rick studied Beth’s stiff shoulders out of the
corner of his eye and silently urged her to turn to him. To ask for his advice. To beg him to fix this
problem and make it go away, just as his Beth had so often turned to him when she was a child and
the other kids wouldn’t play with her the way she wanted them to.

Beth leaned forward and picked up the stack of photos, half-shuffling through them again before her
trembling hands delicately placed them back onto the coffee table. “We aren’t going to do anything,”
she finally answered firmly.

Rick’s teeth clenched so hard in his head he could hear the metal fillings scrape against enamel. His
head turned on his neck stiffly like an animatronic doll and distantly, he heard the little huff of breath
Summer exhaled behind him.

“What?!” Summer annunciated his thoughts so perfectly, her volume fluctuating as she struggled to
keep their conversation quiet.

“This – this isn’t proof;” Beth asserted shakily, clenching her fists against her knees.

“What do you mean this isn’t proof?! I found them in Dad’s stupid romance book. And look!” she
shuffled through until she landed on a picture of Morty’s sleeping face, pointing victoriously at the
blurry shape of a thumb cutting into the frame. “Dad can never keep his stupid fingers out of the
way!”

“We can’t be sure this-” she gestured vaguely to the stack of photos, “this even means what we
think it means,” Beth finished faintly.

Rick practically growled. “Oh yeah?” he swiped his hand over the stack, spreading the photos back
out like playing cards and plucking the most graphic one – his prized memory - from the arch like the
world’s worst magic trick. “And what about this?” He didn’t love the little stifled sob Summer
breathed out behind his back, but now, with Beth clenching her teeth and hardening her eyes, he was
glad someone was here to hold her morally accountable besides her reprehensible flake of a father.

“Yeah, Mom, what about that?” Summer panted, her hands on her hips and her face flushed dark.

“How do we even know that’s – that’s Morty?” Beth replied and Rick recognized her scientifically-
 factual-but-full-of-bullshit tone as something she must have learned from him. “It could be anyone; it
could be a screencap from pornhub-”

“Mom!” Summer demanded uselessly.
“What, you want to go upstairs and – and do a side by side comparison?” Rick couldn’t help but snap, glaring at Beth a little bitterly. How was this not enough? Fuck, he’d been reluctant to even include the one photo of Morty’s cunt in some half-assed bid to spare them the full show but if Beth was going to live so thoroughly in denial, he’d paint the clearest fucking picture imaginable. She wasn’t going to like it, he wasn’t going to like it either, but he could fucking do it.

“Dad!” Beth scolded, swiping up the pictures and holding them face down in her lap.

“I – I’m going to call the police!” Summer asserted and Rick kneaded his forehead to hide an eye roll. The ‘police’ had no fucking part to play in his plan. He didn’t want Jerry in prison. He wanted him gone. He wasn’t much for government interference and he knew Beth wasn’t either; somehow that was the kind of programming all Beths got from their Ricks – absent or not.

Rick sighed heavily and slowly lowered his hand. “Summer, sit down,” he offered, gesturing to the armchair. She huffed, studying Rick with frustration and some sort of plea written in the depths of her eyes. He gestured again with a sweep of his arm and Summer shook her head but paced over to the armchair, planting herself heavily and immediately crossing her arms. The look she pinned her mother with could melt metal.

Rick glanced between the two women. “Okay, let’s talk this out reasonably.”

Summer jumped in immediately, “I think we should tell the police.”

“We don’t have any real evidence,” Beth insisted, her voice hard and logical.

“We have those pictures!” Summer gestured to the photos in Beth’s hands and Beth jerked them back like her daughter had been trying to snatch them away. Rick regretted once again being so naïve as to think a few salacious pictures of Morty would be enough to shove Beth out of her rut. She was too dependent on Jerry and indifferent towards Morty for the quick and easy route to be anything more than wishful thinking. Summer scowled and dragged him from his wallowing with a hard glance. “That’s gotta be enough to start an investigation, at least.”

“Oh, you think the police are going to find something we haven’t?” Beth snorted, rolling her eyes. “This isn’t a Netflix show, Summer, with - with ruggedly handsome detectives who ‘want to make the world a safer place’ or whatever. I went to high school with the county Sheriff and he missed a year because he jumped off the auditorium roof and cracked his skull open. He was wearing a homemade parachute.”

Summer scoffed. “I know you two have your hangups about the police but it’s their job. They could… collect samples and do a - a rape kit.” Summer looked less than pleased about her own idea and Rick didn’t bother hiding a grimace.

Beth voiced the thought Summer had been avoiding: “Oh? And how do you think Morty would feel about that, Summer? If the police showed up and said, ‘Hey, we think you might’ve been raped. Let’s stick some metal up your snatch to find out.’”

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“I think Morty would feel validated. She’s been so jumpy and uptight and she’s got all these… these bruises she can’t explain…”

Rick frowned at that. Fuck he’d been leaving bruises? Well, he had just sucked a hickey into her shoulder. Maybe he had to be a little more careful moving forward. Once Jerry was gone there would be no convenient scape-goat left hanging around.

“Dad, you’re unusually quiet,” Beth accused, turning to him for back-up.
Summer didn’t miss a beat, swiveling her head and casting hopeful eyes to him. “Yeah, Grandpa Rick, you think we should help Morty, right?”

Rick huffed out a breath and finished the last dregs of his whiskey off, setting the bottle down hard enough to thud. “Listen girls, you both make valid points.” They scoffed, practically harmonizing their disdain. “Police are incompetent and an investigation would lead to a lot of unnecessary pain and conflict.” Summer bit her lip while he leaned forward and braced his elbows on his knees. “Namely there’s the fact that right now, Morty’s co-ooough-mpletely clueless. If the police got involved, she’d be asked a lot of questions and those questions…” he paused to sigh for dramatic effect, “…well, they would fuck her up - probably for the rest of her life.”

He could hear Summer’s heavy breathing from halfway across the room. “So what, we just sit around and do nothing? Is that your suggestion?”

“N-oooouh-o, Summer. I’m suggesting you let me take care of this.” Rick steeped his fingers and looked darkly between the two women in the room. “No police, no drama, no news segments or lawyers or trials. No lifetime of therapy to undo damage that never even needed to happen in the first place. Jerry will just…” he shrugged and leaned back into the couch, draping an arm over the back of it. “Disappear.”

Beth was staring at him with wide, fearful, thoughtful eyes. Rick could practically see the gears spinning behind the black of her pupils.

“Where would he go?” Summer asked, her voice soft and low, like she didn’t even want the walls to hear the question.

“We don’t even know if he’s done anything,” Beth interrupted faintly. “He can barely use the printer.” She glanced back down to the photos in her lap, turning them briefly upwards before she grimaced and snapped them face down. Reluctantly, she leaned forward and tucked them into her back pocket, her eyes almost helplessly landing back on Rick.

Summer’s gaze, hazel and smoldering with intensity, didn’t shift away from his face. “What would you do with him?” she repeated sternly, her cheeks pale except for two bright red spots of anger.

“I know a corner of space designed for people just like Jerry.”

“So what, like a space-jail or something?” Summer’s brow furrowed.

Rick smiled. “More like a museum exhibit.” Summer’s eyebrow quirked but she didn’t question him.

Whatever sway he’d been holding over Beth, she snapped out of it like she’d woken up from a bad dream. Her voice was firm again when she asserted, “Why are we even talking about this, you aren’t taking Jerry away.”

Summer shook her head and sighed in frustration. “Mom, whatever is going on, Morty is in danger.”

Beth looked unimpressed with that argument and something bitter wound itself around Rick’s stomach. “She’s tough. She’s – she’s handled herself before, right Dad?”

The look Rick cast her was cold and Beth shrank into herself.

“I need to think about this,” Beth said, reaching for the half full glass of wine still on the table and downing it in three long gulps. “And I’ll – I’ll confront Jerry about this.” Summer opened her mouth but Beth cut her short. “Alone.”
“When?” Summer demanded. “Tonight?”

“Not tonight. I am… way too drunk to deal with this right now,” Beth reached for the bottle of wine, shaking the last few drops into her glass.

Summer’s disgusted, surrendering frown dipped lower. “Tomorrow then?”

“I’ve got work.” Beth said loftily but wilted under her daughter’s scathing look. “After work.” Summer’s glare hardened. “I’ll come home early.”

Summer sighed, and Rick recognized the light dying in her eyes as the inevitable betrayal of yet another authority figure letting her down. God hadn’t he seen enough of that in his life to identify it. She cleared her throat and it was more sad than accusatory when she asked, “And then what?” She sounded young – younger than she had even that first night he’d knocked on the Smith door, and that little snippet of guilt tried to bury itself in his stomach. Luckily it didn’t take long to drown away in whiskey.

“Then…” Beth sighed and she looked worn down, her eyes deeply shadowed in black rings. She’d never looked more like Rick’s daughter and he hated the likeness almost as much as he hated himself. “We’ll go from there.”
Chapter Twelve

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Summer stomped up the stairs, her anger not exactly subtle while Rick and Beth stared unseeingly at the television and drank in silence. Beth outpaced him easily – eventually settling down with an old bottle of scotch she stole from Jerry’s study. She was hardly two glasses into the hard stuff when she passed out, curled up against the armrest, her forehead twisted up, even in sleep. Rick threw a blanket over her prone form, flicked off the TV, and slotted the small plastic waste bin from the den onto the floor next to her head, just in case she woke up in the middle of the night and couldn’t make it to the kitchen sink.

Rick hummed to himself, a little disappointed in her failure to act the way he had predicted. She was supposed to look to him for guidance. She was supposed to let him decide the best course of action. Most importantly, she was supposed to let him dispose of Jerry as he saw fit – and not ask too many questions about it on top of that. After all, in almost every other vein of their lives, that was the natural order of things. It was how she let him handle Morty, after all. But he’d underestimated her penchant for living in denial, especially were Jerry was concerned, and as usual he rallied against the things that tried to prove him wrong. He was Rick: genius and god. And he would make the world shape itself to suit him better.

He sighed and shuffled off to his room.

He hadn’t expected Beth to be so willing to leave Morty in a situation with a predator, either. In fact, he’d been banking pretty heavily on the idea that Beth cared more for her daughter than she seemed to. Ha, good thing for Rick that she didn’t, he thought bitterly and then immediately chose not to stare too deeply into that bottomless well. And while that infinitesimally small itch in the back of his brain wanted to fault her for her moral failings, he was all too aware of his own, particularly when it came to his own child, and especially when this Beth’s indecisiveness was almost certainly a direct result of his predecessor – a man who in all likelihood wasn’t so different from himself.

So it was fine that he wasn’t ordering his Jerry-bot to replace the real-deal tonight. And it was fine that he wasn’t portalng to his downed ship and shoving Jerry into the vacuum of space. Rick had prepared for the worst case scenario and, as he flicked off his light switch and padded confidently through his dark room, he wondered to himself whether some horrible dark corner of his brain had always known he’d need to pull out all the stops.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow would be Jerry’s last day alive. Rick could wait till then.

He shucked off his lab coat and tossed it in the direction of his desk chair. Even with the night of steady drinking, he wasn’t so plastered that he forget to close his blinds and Rick silently commended himself on the phenomena as he laid down heavily on his cot and flicked on the little TV at the foot of his bed. He settled on a Showtime-esque softcore porn from the Corn Universe, a little intrigued to see how people who had evolved from corn got it on. Did they pollinate each other? Did they have genitals and if they did, what did they look like? And if they mashed them together, was the result anything like creamed corn? At the moment they were only kissing and fondling each other’s kernels so Rick scooted up, linking his fingers behind his head and crossing his ankles.

He was so absorbed by the little screen that he startled at the barely-there knock against his door. He jerked to attention, his nerves on edge until he saw how near Morty’s locational readout was to his own and Rick stifled a smile.
“It’s open,” he said, hardly loud enough to be heard through the wood, and he hated the way his breathing stilled as he waited for Morty to work up the nerve to turn the doorknob. Her heartbeat spiked in the nanobot reading, the floorboards creaking at his threshold as she shifted her weight, and Rick was just about ready to tell her to shit or get off the pot when the brass knob rattled, the door slowly easing open.

The hallway was darker than his room but the pale blur of Morty’s skin and the bright yellow of her shirt stood out from the shadows. She shifted her weight uneasily and Rick distantly caught the tail end of Beth’s snoring from the couch a few rooms away. “Can I – mind if I come in, Rick?” Morty finally asked, her voice nothing more than a whisper.

Rick let his artificial eye focus on her expression through the darkness. She was flushed, her eyes bright and half lidded, and as he watched she sucked her bottom lip between her teeth and bit. “Yeah, bud,” Rick finally said, something warm and oily pooling in his stomach as he marveled at the fact that she’d come to him. He hadn’t been off the mark about the new depth to her eyes. He thought it would take more time; that he’d have to coddle her a little more – treat her a little more gently – but of course gentle wasn’t the only thing Morty liked. That’s what made her so special.

She stepped into the room quietly, closing the door on her mother’s faint snores and pausing her approach just out of the circle of light the television cast over Rick’s cot. “ Couldn’t sleep, Morty?” he asked, voice pseudo sweet and raspy, his skin prickling with excitement. If she couldn’t sleep, Rick could definitely help with that – in more ways than one, really.

Whatever he’d been expecting it wasn’t for her arm to flash out quick, something small and heavy arching towards his stomach in a little toss. His hand reacted on instinct, catching the projectile deftly as his nerves geared up for combat but the shape was all wrong for a weapon. He held the item up in front of his face and backlit by the TV he recognized it almost immediately.

Nail polish. The same small teal jar he’d used to paint her nails just a few days ago while wrapped up in a possessive fog.

“The other Morties - they took it off,” she said to Rick like she was reminding him, her voice almost sheepish. His eyes rolled back up to her, the insecure planes of her face just barely glowing with the blueish light from the TV.

She wanted it. The monster that prowled underneath his skin - that grasping beast that pawed at the corners of every action Rick took - roared at the thought. He’d tried his best to starve it; all the useless feelings that risked so much more of him when it was easier to be aloof in an unfeeling galaxy. But Morty - god Morty called out to him like a free hit spoke to a junkie. With every devoted glance, every finger that found a steadying grasp in his lab coat, every one of those fucking smiles she only every quirked just for him, she had been speaking the monster’s language. And now, fuck now, she was telling him she’d be happy to be eaten alive.

Something else long dead inside of Rick gave a determined jolt and clawed its way up from where it was buried deep under most of a lifetimes worth of bitter resentment and the multiverse’s weight in apathy. It was something so much more dangerous than sexual obsession and familial affection and Rick swallowed it down, clawed handfuls of dirt back over that old grave and ignored the stirring underneath the soil.

He leaned up, swinging his legs over the edge of his cot and reaching out an arm to grab Morty around one skinny wrist, tugging her over to stand in the space between his knees. Turned out his fingers could span the width of her waist and he held her still while he shoved his face against her bony sternum, muffling his laughter against her shirt.
After a moment, her hands timidly brushed over his hair, her fingers burrowing into his wiry locks at the base of his skull. When the chuckles against her breast turned to all out guffaws, she fisted his hair and pulled him away enough to catch his crinkled up grin.

He was drunk enough to know his face was probably too happy, his smile a little too wide, but she quirked an eyebrow at him with something akin to fondness as he shook his head, pressing a palm to his eye to catch the moisture that had leaked out.

“Fuck you’re PRECIOUS,” he said, his voice loud and forceful in the night-time quiet, but he was beyond caring and he tossed her onto the cot as he scooted further against the wall to make room for her at the foot of his bed. He shook the little jar of nail polish between two fingers and slotted a serious look down at her through half-lidded eyes. “You know what this means, don’t you?” he asked, his voice rough and low, pegging her with the same look he used when he was interrogating enemies. Don’t fuck with me, the words burned through his head and seared out his eyes like laser beams. Because I’m not playing around.

He knew Morty understood him the same way he knew she’d turn around and walk out if he jerked his head at the door or set the house on fire if he told her it had to be done. They had an understanding, the two of them. He knew her inside and out and she deferred to him like her life depended on it because mostly it did. Morty’s gaze was steady when she nodded, her lip back between her teeth and a hand holding the folds of her skirt down between her slightly splayed legs.

“And you still want it?” he asked, circling his fingers around one of her ankles and dragging her foot closer to him. To want him would be madness, would be stupidity, would be impossible and absurd. But luckily for him, Morty had never been particularly smart.

“Yeah, Rick,” she half-whispered, the velvet heat of her voice electrifying and he knew then there was no going back. Rick ran his crooked teeth along the perfect arch of her foot, chuckling at the way her toes spread as she squirmed.

“You’re such a fucking tease, Morty.” He carefully held her toes flat and blew on them, trailing his hand up the smooth line of her shin as the spark of an idea burst into life in the back of his mind. How to wrap her around his finger just a little bit tighter. How to keep her questions about Jerry’s imminent disappearance to a minimum. How to solder her to his side forever with guilt and fear and a need so deep she’d have to dig out her own veins to extract him from her core.

He smiled while he palmed her other foot, kneading his thumb into her instep before he started painting her nails. “Do you like driving me crazy?” he asked softly and she’d groaned at the pressure on her sole while he raked her over with hot eyes. She looked irrationally turned on and unbearably devourable, her hand still between her legs as her hips arched off the cot. “Did you wear that skirt for me, Morty?” he asked absenty, starting at her biggest toe with quick, deft strokes.

“You’re a yes,” she pointed out when he ignored her question to poke
at the drying paint. “So the real question is whether you like seeing me in a skirt, Rick.”

When his fingerprint barely left an imprint on her nails, he finally met her eyes with a steady glare. “Ca-auugh-reful while those dry, Morty,” Rick commanded while he patiently arranged her legs on either side of his hips and crawled up along her body, kneeling in the space between her thighs. He caught up the hand holding down her skirt, tilting his wrist underneath the fabric to brush the backs of his fingers over her damp underwear and lifting half his eyebrow at the small gasp she couldn’t keep between her lips.

“And if I say I do,” he finally relented to answer her, “are you going to wear them more often?” Her cheeks darkened as he arranged her hand in his, her fingertips laying against his palm. Her breathing quickened, her eyelids dropping to half-mast while she stayed laser focused on the place their hands met. Her fingers quirked, just a little bit, running up his palm and out of the optimal position to paint her nails. He understood what she was getting at when her fingers slid between his thumb and his pointer finger and curled over the back of his hand, their palms slotting against each other.

Her slim hand trembled in his light grip. He was holding her hand.

Morty’s exhale stuttered and the intense heat of her gaze on their loosely locked hands left Rick speechless. She was acting like holding his hand was the most erotic fucking thing she’d ever seen. He tested his theory by curling his digits over the back of her hand, his thumb brushing one long stroke along her pointer finger. Morty whimpered.

Liquid fire surged through his veins, his blood turning to magma as a rush of heat exploded through his nerves like a volcano erupting. His lips were pressed to the back of her knuckles before he consciously elected to make such a flagrant display of affection but Morty mewled and leaned into the motion, spreading her legs and shifting lower to press the searing heat at the V of her crotch against his knee.

He chuckled darkly and made a quick and silent vow to the universe to keep her. If she wanted to be his, then he’d make her his. His entirely. His immutably. She’d belong to him until the end of time; all her sweetness, all her soft edges, all of her half-pathetic, love-deprived desperation. The real world would ruin her: teenage crushes and meaningless hook-ups and summer flings would disappoint her; would chip away at the fragile sugar shell she still lived behind that kept her so good in a world filled with so many awful things.

(That he was the most awful of them all only flickered in the back of his brain for a moment before he crushed the thought like a moth.)

He pressed one more kiss to her thumb before he rearranged her hand back to the starting position, his palm pulsing with the coal-hot heat of her skin as he made quick work of the nails on one hand, then the other. It was a testament to his experience working under pressure that he didn’t crack under her lusty gaze, her blown out pupils raking over him, burning up his skin even under three layers of clothes as her hips thrust mindlessly against his leg.

When he was finished, he cradled her fingertips in his hands and brought them to his lips, blowing whiskey scented air on them while he met her starbright gaze, quirking up half his eyebrow as his mouth curved into a grin.

“Happy now, Mooooorty?” he challenged, shifting to press his knee more insistently against the apex of her thighs. He blew one more long breath against her nails before he dropped her hands and let her study the shiny teal coat, a sigh that almost sounded content breathing out through her nose. He chuckled and pulled away, leaning back against the wall and interlocking his fingers behind his head.
Morty scooted up to her knees looking disappointed that he’d moved away from her. “I – I dunno Rick, I could be happier,” she replied and even though her voice had a playful tilt, she couldn’t disguise the neediness hidden below her words.

Rick’s gaze darted to the screen just over her shoulder. The corn people had pulled out a tub of butter and were slathering each other with handfuls of the stuff, the sight oddly distracting. He caught Morty’s pointed frown from the corner of his eye before she turned and leaned over enough to reach the small TV, huffing as she switched the channel over to the static fuzz of a Glarplarp station – one they heavily debated over and Rick openly hated. Morty swore that if she unfocused her eyes enough, she could make out figures and shapes moving in the static but Rick had never been able to see anything in the colorless noise, no matter what inebriants he experimented with.

“What, are you - am I boring you, Rick?” she needled petulantly, glaring at him while she gently pressed her fingertips to her nails, testing if they were dry.

He fiddled briefly with his watch, inputting a command and watching the interface switch over to a touchscreen button, red and huge and just waiting to be pressed. Then he glanced up his brow at Morty and didn’t bother disguising the self-satisfied leer he was sure painted his face. “Wouldn’t complain if you made things a little more interesting…” he suggested, chuckling as he spread his legs out around her, bending his knees more open as she shuffled closer to him.

Her face screwed up thoughtfully – it was always so obvious when she was trying to work out a problem - before she glanced up at him with a shy blush staining her cheekbones. Her eyes darted down quick to his sternum as her hands fisted in the fabric of her shirt, untucking it from the waistband of her skirt and sliding the material over her head, her hair escaping the head hole in a thick brown cascade.

She was wearing a bra for once. Nothing amazingly fancy – Rick had seen just about every type of underwear the multiverse had spawned and the white cotton and delicate lace trim were hardly earth shattering – but it suited Morty. And the thin white line of her shoulder strap accentuated the deep purple hickey he’d sucked into her shoulder the day before.

But the timid little glanced she shot him underneath her eyelashes, so desperate for his approval, sent his already hot blood into a frenzy.

A long unsteady breath left Rick’s nose and he didn’t resist the urge to palm himself through his pants, Morty following the motion with rabid attention, her lips parting on a pant. She caught his wrist, stilling his motion as she scooted closer, and Rick fought with the instinct to growl. “Bossy tonight, huh Morty?” Rick snarked and Morty ripped her shirt off her arms, tossing it to the floor where it fwumped against a stack of empty bottles.

She rose to her knees and scooted up his body. “I’m horny tonight, Rick,” she emphasized and Rick groaned at the searing heat of the gaze she raked over his features.

“Did I turn you on, Morty?” he murmured as she shifted to straddle his lap, the bulge of his erection slotting between the scalding swelter of her legs. “Did I leave you all worked up?”

Morty leaned her torso over his, her long hair curtaining the dim blue light from the TV and trailing along his chest, a cloud of flowery air wafting into his face. All he could see in the low light was the nebula sparks of her burning brown eyes inches from his face as she braced herself on his shoulders,
shoving him deeper into the cot.

“You’re such a jerk, Rick,” she chided as she dragged her crotch along the solid length of his cock, the layers of clothes between them a delicious, taunting friction. He panted, his hands unlinking behind his head to grab at her thighs, to yank her down harder, to angle her up, but she caught his wrists.

The ferocious animal that lived inside him demanded he flip her over, pin her down, crush her with his superior strength and power but he stilled the urge, that niggling idea still bouncing around in the back of his head and blooming with inspiration.

He quirked half his eyebrow at her condescendingly. “What, you want to try being in charge?” he goaded, holding his hands flat in supplication and letting his arms flop back onto the cot next to his head. “You want to take control?”

Morty stilled above him, her expression almost comically transforming into shock. Rick resented the look and did his best to keep his face neutral but he felt his cheekbone twitch. “Wha – yeah right,” she sassed back, the words choking up on a laugh. Rick’s lips pulled down in a scowl and she started laughing harder. “What, you’re gonna let me do what I want?” The question rankled Rick’s nerves for a variety of reasons but he gave a careful shrug, his head titling in a question as Morty sat back up on her haunches, staring at him like he’d sprouted another head. “You – you’re fucking full of it, Rick,” she settled on in disbelief, still snorting little breaths out her nose like she was trying to keep in her giggles.

“Am I, Moooorty?” Half because it slotted in well with his new plan and half because he wanted to prove her wrong, he leaned up to dig a fist into the lab coat dangling off the back of his desk chair, bucking her off him in the move. She rolled with him, catching herself with one foot on the floor, climbing over him to stand at his bedside and crossing her arms self-consciously over her chest.

When he presented her with two thick cuffs linked together with a heavy hinge, her eyes darted between his raised unibrow and the offered piece of metal, her eyes squinting up like he was speaking garblovian.

“What are - What am I supposed to do with these?” she asked, her voice anxious as Rick thrust them at her, forcing her to catch them or drop them. He scooted down his cot until he was fully supine, lifting his arms up above his head to grip the metal bar at the top of his cot in a firm grip.

He quirked half his eyebrow at her. “Whatever you want, Morty,” he said explicitly. He ran his tongue over his bottom lip and watched her black eyes follow the trail of moisture it left behind.

“No fucking way,” she whispered, more to herself, and Rick couldn’t suppress the heady chuckle.

“So Morty, what do you want?” he taunted again, eyes half lidded as he watched her thumb trace the shape of the cuffs. “What do you want to do with your old grandpa, huh? You want to punish him for giving you a spanking? You want to get him back for leaving you all worked up? You want to sneak into his room in the middle of the night and take advantage of him?”

Even in the dark, his cybernetic eye could pinpoint the moment her pupils dilated in interest, the nanobot reading alerting him to her sudden increased heartrate. Not that he needed the numbers to know Morty had come around to his idea. Her chest was rising and falling with her rapid breathing, the white lacey bra accentuating the movement in the half-light of the room.

Whatever Rick had expected Morty’s first move to be, it wasn’t the shaky, slightly disjointed lurch her hands made to the side of her skirt. When she slid the zipper down, the motion jerky and abrupt,
his eyes couldn’t help but zero in on the peek of bare skin that grew until the zipper snagged three-quarters of the way down.

It was enough for the skirt to slide down her hips and pool around her ankles and suddenly Morty was standing in front of him in just her underwear and bra – something he saw less often than her complete nudity. It was oddly endearing. Seeing them together, Rick realized her underwear was a matching set (he highly suspected Summer’s handiwork – last time he’d gone through Morty’s drawers she hadn’t seemed too interested in that sort of coordination) and the sight was oddly intimate. Like he’d caught her in the act of getting undressed. He rolled his hips unconsciously, excitement coursing down the length of his body.

She pulled her hair over her shoulder and pinned him with a shy, lusty look under long eyelashes. “Come on, Morty, show me what you’ve got.”

She was tentative when she slotted her leg over his waist, resuming her position straddling his hips. She leaned over him again, reaching for his hands, and the cuffs clocked him on the forehead when she worked up the nerve to snatch up a wrist.

“Aw jeez, sorry Rick,” she grimaced, rubbing the place the metal had hit in an attempt to soothe the pain.

“Looks like there’s a reason I’m in charge, huh Morty?” he half-snapped, watching Morty’s brow crinkle up with a new resolve. He wasn’t exactly comfortable with letting someone cuff him, even if that someone was Morty who he could overpower in a moment’s notice and even if the cuffs were coded to unlock for him on a whim.

When he was young, he hadn’t minded being on the receiving end of bondage; of being controlled instead of doing the controlling, of being submissive instead of dominant. Back then, he’d do anything to escape the cold, bleak reality he felt so trapped in and he would chase any high or any fuck – he would kneel and grovel if someone, anyone, would look him in the fucking eyes and help him blow apart. Hell, considering how dangerous it was to put himself at a disadvantage – for how many people waited in dark alleys to slit his throat - he’d embraced the possibility of death.

But even then, even when he was almost always one strong drink away from putting himself in the ground, he’d preferred being the one holding the reigns, tying the knots, and giving orders.

It got worse when he got older and a few too many ding-dong-ditches as deaths door had embedded the fear of true infinity so deep into his bones they ached with it. He’d learned the real danger of getting caught, of being cuffed, of being cornered too many times, and he wasn’t about to allow anything like that to happen again.

He grit his teeth and breathed in deeply the floral smell of Morty’s hair while she circled one of his wrists with a shackle, the two half circles clinking closed magnetically and sizing themselves to the perfect fit. Rick clenched his fist so hard his knuckles cracked and Morty pulled back enough to look down into his face.

“Rick?” she asked, her tone apprehensive, her hands still where they bumped against his. Her eyes were full of doubt as she pouted down at him, waiting for his approval.

“Chickening out, Morty?” he shot back, baring his teeth. “You’d rather be the one in cuffs? I could still flip you over and really give you something to pout about; leave your ass so sore you wouldn’t be able to sit down without thinking of me for days.”

Stars exploded in the blown out pupils of her eyes but she stretched over him again, pulling his free
arm closer to the cuff and circling it around his wrist. When it snapped closed, the raging blackness inside him snarled, demanded he thumb the shackles open and lock them around her writhing wrists.

But he tempered the thought, breathing heavily through his nose and straining his arms against his bonds. The poor girl hadn’t even had the sense to loop them over the metal bar of the cot so besides the fact that he could unlock them anytime he wanted, he had shockingly free reign of his hands. He fisted the metal bar anyways, more to cast the right image than out of a desire to stay behaved.

Morty pulled back, her face filled with shock faintly bordering on fear, but the slow grind she rolled against the bulge in his pants told him she wasn’t exactly disinterested. He canted his hips up to give her a better angle and her eyes rolled back into her head.

“What were you doing up in your room, Morty?” he rasped, his voice rough in the dark.

Her hands slid under his sweater seeking out skin, and as always the heat of her palms scalded him. “T-Touching myself,” she stammered, skimming her nails along his sides.

“What were you thinking about?” he growled, bracing himself against the metal frame to grind up harder into her core. The fabric of his slacks dimmed the heat of her and he chased after it with desperate fanaticism.

She licked her lips before she quietly admitted, “You,” rolling her hips against his.

“Good,” he groaned, his skin tingling in the trail left behind by her fingers. “Show me,” he demanded and she blushed under his half-lidded stare.

Her hand jerked toward her underwear on reflex to comply but then she quirked her brow down in a frown, slowing her thrusts. “I – Rick, I’m the one in charge here,” she asserted, her voice cracking while his instincts screamed to make her obey. “And I – you get to do what I want for once,” she continued on, a little less meek, shuffling back enough to paw at the buckle of his belt.

Rick gasped when she wiggled a warm palm under his khakis and fisted his twitching cock, maneuvering it out through the open fly and tugging his pants down his hips. She trailed the circle of her hand loosely over the throbbing shaft, nestling the stiff length of it against the front of her panties as she stroked it almost lazily.

Rick choked on his inhale, a wet dribble of precum darkening the white cotton shielding her sex from view. “Summer get you those?” he asked, his gaze locked on where their bodies almost slotted together.

“She told me to save them for someone special,” Morty sighed as she cupped him and dragged the damp, fabric covered folds of her sex along the length of him. Even through the material, Rick could feel her skin part around him and envelop him in heat. Then, like an afterthought she stupidly added, “Like if I went on a date with Jessica,” and black rage curdled his vision.

“Then I guess I’d better ruin them,” he spat, canting his hips until the tip of him nudged against her covered core. Morty whimpered, a hand shooting up to cover her mouth. “No one gets to see you like this but me, Morty,” he vowed, clenching his fists to keep from unlocking the cuffs. Not yet. He needed to be sure Morty knew her fucking place and would never challenge him again. He needed to make this look convincing.

“You’re such a slut for me, Morty, aren’t you?” he whispered heatedly into the dark, the cold light of TV static silhouetting her against the night, her slender body writhing on top of him. “You know, Jessica could never make you feel like this, don’t you Morty.” Her slit eyes popped open and glared
down at him with something a little like hurt. “She’d never give you the time of day. She doesn’t like you, Morty; she thinks you’re a charity case.”

Morty’s grinding slowed but Rick had found just the right angle to prod up and nudge at her clit with the tip of his head. Morty squinted her eyes closed in reluctant pleasure and ground out, “Jeez Rick, can’t you - don’t you ever shut up?” between her teeth.

“She’s not like me, Morty. You really think she’d kiss you if some dimwit jock wasn’t hanging around to watch?” he asked, rolling his hips up and moaning as Morty’s nails dragged over the skin of his stomach. “You’re my special girl, Morty. You’re one in a fucking million. You think Jessica knows that?”

“Rick stop,” Morty whimpered, her hips continuing their steady motion.

“You weren’t thinking about her when you were touching yourself earlier, that’s for fucking sure. It wasn’t her hand you were imagining buried between your thighs, was it baby?” Morty bit back a keen and glared down at him furiously. “Tell me what you were imagining, Morty. Tell Grandpa Rick what was getting you off—” his rant was cut short when her hand landed over his mouth, stifling his words. Finally. His finger hovered over the button on his watch.

“Jeez, Rick, can’t you be quiet?”

He caught the side of her hand between his teeth and bit. She yanked the appendage away with a small noise somewhere between shock and pain. “Make me,” he hissed and Morty’s glower melted into thoughtful uncertainty.

“F-Fine,” she stammered, catching his not at all subtle hint and glancing around like she’d find a suitable gag sitting on his bedside table. And sure, plenty of days she might – especially in the future if late night visits from Morty were going to become a thing – but the surrounding area offered up no easy solutions and Rick struggled not to roll his eyes.

To break the concentration screwing up her face, he thrust his bare erection against the moist fabric of her panties, startling a gasp out of Morty as she dropped her head to watch his swollen head bump against her hot, covered skin. When she glanced back up at him, something wicked burned in the whites of her eyes and heat pooled in Rick’s stomach, his dick throbbing in time with his heartbeat.

She clambered off him and Rick didn’t dare taunt her lest she change her mind. She shimmied out of her panties, lifting her ankle to tug them off and bunch them into her fist as she straddled him again, both of them gasping at the feel of skin on skin. Her folds were wet and hot as fire and she spread her thighs until she sandwiched his shaft between her lips.

His mouth was still open on a gasp when she slotted her thumb between his teeth, keeping his mouth pried open with one hand while she shoved the musky fabric of her underwear between his lips.

Rick was begrudgingly impressed by her boldness and the youthful ghost that occasionally haunted his bones and enjoyed the freedom of submission practically swooned. Even the possessive monster sparked with desire. He could taste her. She retracted her thumb and pressed a hand over his mouth, sealing her panties between his teeth. Her electric, anxious eyes boring into his and the bare, wet heat of her almost enveloping his cock nearly unraveled him but he kicked to the surface of his lust-fogged brain, pressing a thumb to the flat face of his watch and feeling the slight vibration that meant the command had been sent.

Showtime.
Morty canted her hips and Rick let his eyes roll closed. “This what you want, Rick?” Morty asked, the words somewhere between rhetorical and doubtful. Like she was still asking permission to continue. She was too sweet – and too easy to break. When he opened his eyes and caught her in a searing stare, she visibly grew in confidence. “Do you like the way I taste?”

She looked surprised when he nodded below her hand and thrust up into her but his acquiescence spurred her on. She slid the wet folds of her sex along his pulsing cock and he groaned behind her feeble gag. Her tiny panties didn’t do much to muffle his voice and the ease with which he could shake her off and spit them out was laughable but with her palm slotted over his lips and his hands cuffed above his head, they really sold quite the picture. Especially when the door swung open silently, the movement almost indiscernible in the dark except that Rick had been watching for it, waiting for it expectantly.

“You want to know what I was thinking about earlier, Grandpa,” she whispered, goading him with the title she nearly never used to address him. The shiver it sent down his spine would have alarmed Rick if he weren’t already uncomfortably aware of how terrible he truly was. “You want to know what I was thinking about while I got myself off?” She reached a hand down between their bodies and gripped him firmly around the base of his cock, angling him up until his head prodded at her entrance and holy fuck what? Was she about to – were they about to –

She let her weight sink slightly onto him, the sensitive tip of his dick dipping into warm velvet and Rick tensed, unprepared for her audacity. “I - I was thinking about your thick cock, Rick,” Morty murmured as the shadowy figure of a man stepped into the circle of flickering light from the TV. “I was thinking about what you’d feel like inside of me,” she whispered around a gasp, her eyes closing as she sank a little lower, his head nudging just the slightest bit deeper inside her, her hot walls a vice. “What it would feel like to be filled to the brim,” she breathed. “I want to be yours, Rick,” she vowed and the words were like a balm over a lifetime of black eyes and scraped knees and bruised knuckles. He fought the instinct to surge up, to take her, and the craving struck him harder as the conflicted features of Jerry’s face came into focus over her shoulder. Inadvertently, Rick thrust upwards, the entirety of his head sinking into her warm, taught flesh and she pressed harder against his lips with her palm, stifling his throaty groan. “I want to fuck you until-”

Rick would never know how that sentence was going to end.

The floorboards next to the old cot creaked and the heartrending look of devotion that she’d been boring down onto Rick with the heat of a thousand suns froze into a wide-eyed mask of fear when a hand landed heavily on Morty’s shoulder.

“Morty?”

Rick watched every speck of color drain from her face when the carefully modulate voice of her father’s doppelganger shattered the brittle silence.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the amazing comments on the last chapter!
“D-Dad?!” Morty breathed, scrambling away from Rick towards the end of the cot, cringing into herself at the look Jerry-bot swept over her naked skin.

“Rick?” Jerry-bot asked tentatively and Rick watched the paradox in its programming play out across Jerry’s features. Rick had remotely ordered it to report to him for a new command but it had also been explicitly commanded to stay away from Morty who just so happened to be no more than two feet away from Rick. Jerry-bot furrowed its brow in confliction.

Rick was also aware of what Morty would be seeing; Jerry’s face screwed up in confusion and uncertainty that bordered on revulsion. “I-” it started again and trailed off.

Some strange urge in its programming – maybe a desire to get a clear cut command from Rick – urged its hand to reach up to Rick’s face. Rick allowed the synthetic fingers to pinch a corner of Morty’s panties from between Rick’s teeth and pull them slowly from his mouth, the shape of them clear once they dangled above Rick’s chest.

Morty whimpered from her place at the foot of Rick’s cot, her legs curled up to her chest, and Jerry-bot yet again swept its glance to her, her underwear still dangling from between its fingers.

“I’m – I’m gonna go,” the robot finally settled on faintly, shifting a little unsteadily towards the door, still struggling with the paradox of its two commands.

As soon as Jerry-bot had turned its back, Morty jerked like a starter’s pistol had gone off. “Stop him,” she hissed at Rick, leaning over his body to fiddle with the cuffs wrapped around his wrists. She clearly had no idea what she was doing but she didn’t ask any questions when Rick sneakily swiped his thumb over the keypad and they sprang open into her hands.

Rick rolled to his feet and locked Jerry-bot into the sleeper hold, his hand against the back of its neck surreptitiously flicking the off switch hidden behind its ear after a few moments of silent grappling. His arms fell to release the robot into a dead-weight drop to the floor.

Rick studied Jerry-bots hapless face as he tucked his erection into his slacks and buckled his belt, ruminating on how that couldn’t have worked out better if he’d written a fucking script. Propping his hands on his hips, he turned to Morty.

Both of her hands were plastered over her mouth and the rest of her face was taken up by wide, haunted eyes. “So that happened,” Rick grunted, nudging Jerry-bots foot out of the way to gently close his bedroom door, Beth’s snores still echoing through the first floor.

“Oh fuck,” Morty whispered behind her trembling hands, gaze locked on her father’s doppelganger. “Oh jeez oh shit oh fuck…”

Rick settled down into his desk chair and slid open the lowest drawer. Bottles clinked against each other and he grabbed one blindly, unscrewing the cap and taking a long sip. Vodka. It went down smooth as he watched Morty’s nanobot reading flash with all the chemical and physiological symptoms of a panic attack.

“What are we going to do, Rick?” she pleaded as she started to rock in place, eyes glassy and distant
as she started to disassociate.

Rick frowned. He needed her to stay present; present and emotional – the kind of emotional that made bad decisions. He took another long sip of vodka and burped to get her attention. “He’s not going to stay conveniently unconscious forever,” Rick warned. Except of course that the thing curled up on the floor was a robot and as such he absolutely could but Morty needed a bit of a ticking clock. Rick took another long sip from the bottle.

“What’ll happen when – what’ll he do when he wakes up?” she asked, seemingly more directed at herself than at Rick when she started to rant. “He’ll tell mom. He’d – He’s gonna tell mom for sure. Oh fuck. He’s gonna tell mom and she’s gonna think…” she trailed off, fisting her hands in her hair.

“You were…”

“Ha-auuuuh-ndcuffed,” Rick supplied, trying not to sound too happy.

“And you had…”

“Your panties in my mouth. Ye-euuuugh-p.” She looked vaguely nauseous but he knew she wouldn’t actually spew chunks until her lips turned white, a convenient tell in their line of adventuring.

Her eyes met his and that turgid blackness inside of him squirmed around like an overfed worm. “Fuck. Oh fuck.” Her breathing was quick and shallow and deafening in the silence of his dark room. “What are they – what do you think they’ll do?” she asked, ducking down to swipe her shirt up off the ground and pull it over her head mechanically.

“They’ll split us up, Morty.” Rick answered flatly, staring at her until tears welled in her eyes and she dropped to the floor, scrabbling across his beer bottle littered carpet to collect her skirt. “They’ll –eerurp- kick me out or – or send you away to counseling.” He rolled his eyes and tipped the bottle back. “Either way, no more Rick and Morty.”

She tugged her skirt up her legs and her shaking hands struggled with the zipper, giving up when it got snagged in her t-shirt halfway up. She reached out for his leg, melting against him when he held out a hand, sinking to her knees between his feet.

“You have a way to fix this, right Rick?” she begged, her hands fisted in his sweater. “You’ve – you’ve got something to fix this, right?” Rick’s foot knocked against a stack of cans and Morty jerked her head around, staring at the unconscious Jerry-bot with an open look of despair, watching him for signs of life. “Rick, you’ve got an idea, don’t you? I – I don’t want to get split up…”

Rick leaned over, reaching his hand across Jerry-bot’s lifeless form, ignoring Morty’s desperate tugging at his arm as he looped a finger through the crotch of Morty’s panties still clenched in Jerry-bots hand. With a firm grasp on her elbows, he raised Morty to her feet, her legs wobbly underneath her. He bent over, holding her underwear open for her to step into and she reluctantly did, steadying herself with a grip she curled into the shoulders of his sweater.

Between her arousal and his spit, the fabric was wet and cold. She shivered as it slid up her legs. Rick took the time to carefully arrange it over her hips, flattening the seams against her body and sliding his hand between her legs to massage the wet fabric against her clit, rubbing his saliva into her folds. Morty jerked, her hand lifting to slap him away but Rick was quicker, catching up her wrist in a vice grip and pulling her towards him.

“You already know my idea, Morty,” Rick growled, Morty’s eyes teary and bugged out as she gasped and strained against his hold. His free hand wiggled under the hem of her underwear and
buried two fingers in her with one solid thrust. She grimaced at the invasion, her nose scrunching up. “What did I tell you would happen if Jerry found out?” he demanded, his voice liquid mercury poison.

She pinched her eyes closed and shook her head, her scrabbling hand darting to his wrist to try and pull him out of her. Rick scowled and plunged his fingers deeper until she balanced on her toes. For all her resistance, her cunt was soaking, the walls clenching against him in a delicious pattern he couldn’t wait to feel around his cock. “Jeez, he’s – he’s right there, Rick,” she whimpered.

Rick cut an absent look to Jerry-bot and felt the spark of vindictive pleasure temper itself with the knowledge that it wasn’t the real Jerry. How unfortunate. “What did I tell you would happen?” he asked again, his voice a dark command.

She must have sensed how much she wouldn’t have liked if he had to ask a third time because she stammered, “You – You said you’d make him disappear,” on a sob.

“And what Morty, you didn’t believe me?” he wondered aloud and Morty shook her head again, abandoning her feeble attempts to remove his hand from between her legs to steady herself against his shoulder. “If I make him disappear, no one will ever find out about us, Morty. No one will try to break us up.”

His thumb found her clit and she gasped at his touch, letting him reel her in closer to his chest with the grip around her wrist.

“Mom and Summer… they’ll – they won’t be happy he’s gone,” she half whimpered, trying to bury herself in the curve of his neck.

“I’ll take care of that, Mooorty,” he whispered into her ear, his fingers pumping into her slow and deep. “I’ll take care of everything.”

He slowly loosened the grip on her wrist, sliding his hand along hers until their palms pressed together. Morty gasped, turning her head to take in the sight of her soft pink skin pressed against his rough callouses. Her hand was much smaller than his, her fingers not even long enough to reach the first crease below his fingertips. Then he shifted, his fingers sliding between hers to interlock and curling in a gentle hold. Her breathing stuttered, that endless spiral of emotion sparkling in the back of her eyes and absorbing all the light in the room.

Rick’s breath escaped him in a puff and she cut her swirling eyes to him. “You’re my Morty. We were made to be together.” She curled her hand tighter around his, her painted nails glimmering in the almost dark. “Just say the word, Morty. Beg me, Morty, and I’ll make this all go away.” He slipped his fingers from her wet cunt and curled his arm around her waist, dragging her closer to him, pulling her between his legs.

“Rick,” she pleaded out like a sob, her forehead pressed to his, their noses slotting next to each other.

“You’re mine, aren’t you Morty?” he whispered feverishly against her lips, nosing along her cheekbone to exhale a shaky breath into her ear. “Let me take care of you, baby. Let me keep you.”

He licked a stripe up the shell of her ear and she whimpered.

“Say it, Morty,” he urged, just the slightest bite of anger leaking into his tone unbidden. “Ask me to clean up your mistake or I’ll have to leave, Morty. Is that what you want? You want Jerry to call the cops? I’m not gonna stick around to get arrested.”

“No Rick, please,” she practically wept, her voice cracking on his name. She flung her free arm
around his neck and clung to him with choking desperation. He felt her tears trickle down his throat to pool in his collar bone. “Fix this, please Rick,” she whispered into his shoulder, his sweater muffling the sound. “I – I don’t care how. Just don’t leave, please.”

Rick sighed out long and slow, his eyes closing blissfully.

“That’s my sweet girl,” he soothed, kissing her temple and rubbing her back in long calming strokes. “That’s my good Morty. Let – let me take care of everything.”

He unwound his fingers from hers to sling an arm over the backrest, fishing around in his lab coat pocket. His hand alighted on a small vial half-full of terilliam juice; the last terilliam juice in the multiverse after he’d destroyed Terra IV. He uncorked it with his teeth and fistred the hair at the base of Morty’s neck, tilting her head back and angling the vial to her lips. “I’m going to take care of you, Morty,” he promised, pouring the vial’s contents between her parted lips. “Just drink this, buddy,” he commanded and she whimpered around her swallow, bright wet eyes swiveling to meet his.

“Rick, I don’t-”

“Don’t even trip, dawg,” he hushed, loosening the fist clenched in her hair and dropping the vial to bounce harmlessly off the carpeted floor. “When you wake up, everything will be over,” he promised and the light in her eyes dimmed, her weight sinking onto his lap as her legs turned to mush.

“Rick…” she trailed, her arm slithering from around his neck and down his chest as she collapsed into his arms.

He cradled her as she sank deeper into his hold. “You gave yourself to me, Moooorty. And I don’t like giving up what’s mine.”

Her eyes flickered and then closed, her head lolling against his shoulder bonelessly as she finally drifted off completely.

Carrying her through a portal and into the underground bunker reminded him vividly of that first night he’d spent in the Smith house even if her slight weight and intense heat had grown so familiar to his arms since then. They had never gone back to Cartus Prime; it wasn’t like the phosphorescent flowers were good for anything but admiring and Rick didn’t often waste his time with that sort of sight-seeing bullshit. Still, Rick couldn’t help the spark of an idea that going back might appeal to Morty who was too drugged up during their first visit to really appreciate the scenery.

Rick scowled and blamed the reappearance of his terilliam (and an entire evening’s worth of drinking) for throwing him down the useless tunnel of nostalgia. If he were a more spiritual man, he might have wondered whether it was some sort of cosmic irony that he’d inadvertently split the last dose of the multiverse’s best anesthesia on the same girl, more than a year apart – first with the intention to be rid of her, then to reorder the world to keep her - but he wasn’t a spiritual man and he knew better than anyone that the universe didn’t run on divine plans.

He set Morty down against the far wall of his bunker in the area usually reserved for containing prisoners, hunching down to his knees so she wouldn’t hit the hard metal floor from too high a height.

He shook himself out of his inebriated existential rumination. Right now, he had more important things to do than brew on the strange folds of the universe. He had an idiot to exile. And a pseudo daughter and granddaughter to scar. His docket was full to the fucking brim.
He arranged Morty into as comfortable a position as he could, shooting a quick portal to gather some materials and returning with a pillow and a thick blanket. He tucked the pillow under her head and threw the blanket over her, frowning at himself for even bothering. But he didn’t want her to be *sore* when she woke up, or fucking sick. He wanted her fresh and nimble. He wanted her pliant and willing and desperate. And he definitely didn’t want to watch her quietly wonder at a new set of aches and pains, her voiceless complaints somehow deafening to him. So the small bids for her comfort were necessary for his future happiness.

Her vitals were stable and the drug’s saturation in her bloodstream put the countdown to eyes-open somewhere between thirteen to fourteen hours down the line. That was plenty of time; *more* than enough time really. Jerry would be out of the Smith house in under twelve and Rick couldn’t help but smirk at the thought.

Once he’d stood and brushed imaginary dirt from his knees, he turned to his cabinet of robots, palming the door open to reveal the whole family except for Jerry-bot who was still blissfully turned off upstairs. He typed a few commands into the computer terminal and Morty-bot’s eyes flickered open like she was waking up from a particularly nice dream.

When she caught sight of Rick she smiled – almost the same smile the real Morty greeted him with every morning but *not quite*, he’d never quite managed to perfect that in the programming, her human eyes a little too bright and too deep to reproduce – and stepped out of the cabinet, her foot catching on the bottom ledge. She caught herself and chuckled a small, embarrassed laugh, swiping her hair behind her ear. Except for that smile, she really was one of Rick’s masterpieces.

“Hey Rick,” she said happily once she stood before him. “What do you want me to do today?”

Rick pulled his flask from his pocket and took a sip. “Ba-aaaaaaaah-sic Morty protocol with a few stipulations,” Rick answered, sweeping his eyes over the robot. She was a perfect replica of the girl curled up on the floor behind him, down to her fucking fingerprints. Except for the painted nails, the hickey, and the clothes. Rick frowned. Well, better safe than sorry.

He traced an oval in the shape of Morty’s hickey on Morty-bot’s shoulder. “Bruise here,” he ordered and Morty-bot turned her small face to watch his finger on her synthetic skin. The even perfect shade of peach darkened where his finger touched. When it was close enough to the mark he left on Morty, he pulled his hand away. He wouldn’t even bother except he was fairly sure Summer had seen the mark and he didn’t want to risk even the *chance* that someone might notice any anachronisms.

Morty-bot turned away from her shoulder and smiled up at him happily while he rooted around in his pocket. When he tossed the bottle of nail polish to the robot, she caught it after it bounced twice between her hands. “Paint your nails. Fingers and toes.”

Morty-bot got right to it, toeing off her tennis shoes and peeling off her socks, crouching down right where she’d been standing to get to work on her toes.

Rick turned to Morty, the *real* Morty, and sighed. Odds were good he’d have to change her clothes during the switch back anyways so it would save him the effort later when he’d probably be crunched for time. With a quick twitch of his wrist, he threw the blanket off and started undressing her, piling her clothes into a little heap.

Despite how well he knew it made him a monster, there was something insidiously gratifying about the idea of holding Morty captive, nude and locked in his bunker where no one could get to her but him. Too bad she would be unconscious for it; that kind of ruined the point. He briefly toyed with the idea of cuffing her even if she was out cold – payback for what she’d put him through earlier – but decided the two of them might wind up playing out his brief (but suddenly urgently vivid)
fantasy in the near future and he’d rather save the sight of her bound and at his mercy for when he could watch her face shift between anxious and excited, her eyes glowing with apprehension and too much trust.

Once he’d slid off every last article of clothes, new bra and abused underwear included, he made a point to wrap her in the blanket like a cocoon and double checked that none of her bare skin made contact with the cold metal floor.

Morty-bot had made quick work of painting her nails and was standing at his worktable, tapping her spread fingers against the counter and humming the little mindless tune Morty favored when she was spacing out. She jumped to attention when he padded back to her, shoving the pile of clothes in her direction.

“Change,” he ordered and she did without delay, mindful of her still drying nails.

When she was done, he gave her another up and down. Now she was a perfect replica. She’d probably go upstairs and change into pajamas anyways but he suspected Morty had been planning to wear that skirt to school tomorrow.

“Initiate Basic Morty Protocol Alpha-6.4: School and Family Habits.” Morty-bot nodded, shifting her weight to her other foot while Rick glared down his nose at her. “Instituting Conditional Order: If Jerry-bot leads you to a bed, enter sleep mode until o-oouugh-otherwise specified.” Rick watched the command flicker in the back of her pupils before she smiled again.

“Okay, Rick. If dad takes me to bed I’ll go to sleep.”

Rick frowned. He’d put a lot of work into Morty-bot and he hadn’t expected to be using her for this. But she’d be asleep the whole time and would never have to find out what happened and she was a robot so even if she did, she’d be fucking thrilled to be doing what he tasked her with. Jeezus, what was wrong with him? Getting sentimental over a robot. What the fuck had happened to him?

“G-ooouuh-o up to bed,” he snapped more out of frustration with himself but Morty-bot looked unaffected by his harsh tone.

“Goodnight, Rick,” she said before swiveling towards the ladder and disappearing out the dark hatch.

He tapped a long calloused finger against his worktable and tilted the flask up to his lips, turning to watch the blanket cocoon that was Morty rise and fall faintly with her light breathing.

How long had it been since Rick had masterminded something so artfully? A decade? A decade and a half. And in between nothing had felt half as sweet as this victory was winding up to be.

He drained the flask, and pulled his sweater off over his head, crouching down on one knee to wrangle Morty’s limp torso into the material before he shot a portal back to his room, back to Jerry-bot, and back to the serrated jaws of the bear-trap.

He outlined the details of the final stages of his master plan with a little more of a slur than he’d anticipated but Jerry-bot nodded in understanding, his forehead wrinkled in a perfect imitation of Jerry’s when he was lost in ‘deep’ thought. Rick snatched up the vodka bottle, sipping from it while he listened to footfalls on the stairs and down the upstairs hallway. He held his breath, determined not to miss the faint, familiar swish of a portal opening in the master bedroom and the barely there, cut-off wind up of Jerry’s yell.

In the silence that followed, no one investigated the sound. The Smith family was fairly used to
sleeping through late night quarrels (or worse) and besides, he knew for a fact Summer slept with earbuds in and Beth’s wine-thick snores had nearly drowned out Jerry’s half-aborted shout.

The rest of the night was a blur. Rick drank a lot, bouncing between putting together a new memory-wipe gun with spare parts in the garage and reconfiguring all the programming that fielded calls from the school or other potentially concerned authority figures over to Beth-bot. He depleted the last of his K-lax while he jammed out on his guitar and almost wound up fiending hard enough to consider waking Morty up to go with him to collect some more. Luckily he remembered that there was something more important going on before he stuck her with a vial of something that would really wake her up and the needle clattered to the ground and rolled away under a table.

It was around there that he cracked into a bottle of alcohol from Dorian 5 which was stronger than anything you could get on earth and might have blinded Rick if his nanobots hadn’t rushed to repair the brain damage.

A couple sips later (on top of the copious amount of alcohol in his blood already and the rivaling mix of uppers), he blacked out.

When Rick woke up, his head was sore where his cheekbone and eye socket pressed against metal. His ass had spent most of the night in the air and his face was feeling the after effects of supporting his torso’s weight. He flopped into a better position, aware that there was something soft and warm and body shaped lying next to him but whoever it was didn’t move when he turned, his legs draping over them heavily.

His eyes were like sandpaper, the lids so gunked up he had to craft an eye-drop/pick-me-up blind from his supine position on the floor. The struggle was worth it, however, when he squeezed the fluid into his eyes and his brain immediately revved into gear. More effective than a coffee enema; that shit. With his vision reinstated he turned, realizing the dead weight next to him was Morty and he had, at some point, wedged himself mostly behind and slightly over her. Given the configuration of his body and the way they were laying more perpendicular than parallel, he ascertained his ass up sleeping position had been maintained because he passed out draped over her waist like a blanket, except, as usual, it was her who radiated heat.

He groaned, checking his vital signs and then hers, raising a heavy hand to readjust the blanket over her shoulder when he realized the whole reason he was awake in the first place was because a little alarm on his watch was beeping and buzzing, trying to demand his attention despite the hangover.

His eyes swung between his watch and Morty at least three times before his memories of the previous night slotted into place. Right. Morty was down here wearing his sweater and curled up under his blanket because today was the day. The day of Jerry’s reckoning.

And apparently he’d nearly slept through show time.

He pried his sweater over Morty’s head, scowling at himself for whatever sentimental bullshit had prompted him to dress her in it in the first place, tucking the blankets back around her shoulders and pointedly ignoring he way the rough knit fabric smelled like her floral shampoo. He rolled to his feet, his hips popping loudly as he twisted his back in a stretch and slung his arms into his lab coat, his pockets rattling companionably with all his favorite contraptions.
The computer told him everything he needed to know: Beth had left for work slightly later than her usual time, clearly bogged down by a hangover herself. Rick dragged a hand over his face and through his hair in sympathy pain just watching her stumble out the door, tousle-headed and groaning. Summer and Morty-bot had dashed off for school together not long after that.

But Jerry-bot was just letting himself back into the house with a curious looking Morty-bot at his heels and that was what had set off his alarm and triggered Rick’s jarring wake-up call. A glance at his watch told Rick it was just before noon in the middle of the school day and Jerry-bot was leading Morty-bot up the stairs by a hand dangerously low on her back.

Rick drained the last liquid from the bottle of vodka he found lying on its side next to the keyboard, and snooped around for something else to top off his flask. It took a while; most the bottles he found were empty and the ones that weren’t didn’t have enough to wash the bad taste out of his mouth let alone fill his flask. Eventually he found a wad of plastic bags with a receipt for the night before, one of Rick’s stolen credit cards charged for a hefty purchase of enough booze to last him at least a week.

Rick climbed the ladder to the garage and sure enough, he found a full bottle of whiskey in his desk drawer. He took a long swig and then filled his flask, chuckling at how good Drunk Rick was at dispersing liquor bottles like fucking easter eggs.

Flask filled and hair-of-the-dog acquired, he burped and shoot a portal to the hallway outside the high school cafeteria.

Finding Summer in the milling teenagers wasn’t hard; her red hair popped out from the crowd. She was leaning against a locker, arms wrapped around a book she was clutching to her chest, the flirty stance almost unbearably obvious as she chatted with a boy in a letterman jacket. The coy tilt of her eyebrows was momentarily reminiscent of a look he was fairly sure Morty had hit him with yesterday but he skidded over that thought, dipping his unibrow into a concerned V and catching Summer by the arm.

“Summer, you – you’ve gotta come with me,” he demanded, his voice rough from disuse. He multitasked: singlehandedly pounding back another gulp of vodka from his flask while he hurried her away from the oblivious jock. Summer could do better than some lumbering meat-head, anyways.

“Wha – Grandpa!” she complained, only minimally resisting his pulling as he dragged her around a corner to the principal’s hallway. “That was Jeremy Crasle,” she stage-whispered in a tone that would be excessive if she said he was the second coming of Jesus. “Why don’t you pull Morty out of class,” she insisted, yanking her hand away from him and rubbing at her forearm.

“That’s –uuuuurp- the thing, Summer, I couldn’t find her. She’s not here,” he blathered, thankful that was all the explanation she needed before her eyes narrowed into confused slits.

“What, but we came to school together this morning and…” she trailed off, a frown pinching the space between her eyebrows. “And if she’s not with you…”

“Ah, Rick,” a voice interrupted them, the door beside them swinging open to reveal Principal Vagina. “I thought I heard your voice.” Summer and Rick snapped their heads around to glare at the man and he frowned at their harsh reaction. “Did you come to take Morty to her doctor’s appointment?”

“What doctor’s appointment?” Rick demanded, voice a flat line, trading a speculative look with Summer.

“Morty’s father already came to pick her up,” he assured them and Rick watched Summer’s face
“You know I thought that was a little weird, usually it’s you taking her out of class. Was there some kind of mix-up?”

“No, no mix-up,” Rick hastily asserted, turning Summer by her shoulders and steering her away from the Principle. “I must have just forgotten something. Getting old or –uuuuurp- whatever.”

“It happens to everyone Rick, you shouldn’t beat yourself up over it,” Principle Vagina called to their retreating backs but they were both practically sprinting by the time they rounded the corner.

“He took Morty out of school,” Summer said, her voice bleak and eyes locked on Rick as they skidded to a halt in the stairwell.

Rick let his glower darken. “She didn’t have a fucking doctor’s appointment,” he insisted while he pulled his phone out of his pocket, Beth’s number at the ready. She answered after two rings. “Dad?” She sounded tired and less than thrilled to be hearing from him.

“He took her out of school, Beth,” he explained, boring into Summer’s worried, hazel eyes. Eyes that were an eerie replica of her mother’s. “Jerry pulled Morty out of school today, I’ve got Summer; you have to meet us at the house.”

“What?” she breathed, her voice slow and confused. “Dad, I don’t-”

Rick didn’t have time for Beth to dither or waste time. Her and Summer needed to get to the house now. He’d instructed Jerry-bot not to blow his load until he’d been discovered but it was still programmed to imitate Jerry and he wasn’t known for his lasting ability. “You know what, fuck it,” he shot a portal at the wall and manhandled Summer through the green swirl and into Beth’s office. The woman in question was hunched over her desk pressing her phone to her ear with one hand and holding a cold can of soda against her forehead with the other. She startled when her father and daughter unexpectedly walked through her wall, her dark rimmed eyes widening. “Come on,” Rick insisted, pocketing his phone and spinning the dial on his gun, shooting another portal where the first had disappeared.

“What – Jerry pulled Morty out of class?” she repeated blankly like the words hadn’t yet sunk in, her phone still hovering in her hand halfway up to her ear. “Why would he do that?”

Her denial snapped Summer to attention and Rick took a step back when the teenager approached Beth’s desk, the move more threatening than Rick thought her capable of, leaning over the wood with her hands on her hips in a power pose. “Why do you think, Mom? Not get your head out of your ass and let’s find Morty!” Way to go, Summer, Rick cheered silently in his head.

Summer’s harsh tone woke Beth out of her stupor and she jerked to her feet, her chair knocking over behind her and clattering against the wall. “You said you’d watch out for her,” Beth mumbled, less accusatory than confused, and Rick grabbed her by the bicep and dragged her around her desk.

“I don’t have eyes everywhere,” he growled, shoving her towards the portal. Of course, he practically did but she hardly needed to know that. “Send a kid to school and you figure they’re safe…” his watch started beeping and he glanced at it, lips forming a hard line when he dismissed the little alarm. “Rohypnol,” he muttered, and he could hear two shaky exhalations in the otherwise perfect silence. “We gotta go.”

Summer was the first one into the new portal and Rick was the last, not entirely certain Beth wouldn’t turn and bolt but she stumbled through before him in a daze with no more complaints. When he stepped out into the family living room, the first thing he noticed was the frantic pounding echoing faintly from upstairs. Beth and Summer hadn’t missed it either, judging from their nearly
matching gapes of horror, their eyes turned up to the ceiling.

Rick was glad – so glad – that Summer had the wherewithal to drag Beth to the stairs by a limp hand. One look at Beth’s slightly unfocused eyes was all Rick needed to know she would never investigate the sound on her own. He half imagined her unfolding a newspaper and sitting down on the couch, robotically ignoring the terrible knocking from upstairs to keep up her happy-life façade – especially when she tripped on the last step and didn’t seem too interested in getting back up.

Rick followed the pair sedately, taking Beth’s other arm to help Summer heft her to her feet.

The second floor hallway was dim in the daytime – no windows to let in any light but not yet dark enough to turn on a light. The brightest swath was a patch of daylight cutting through the cracked open door of the master bedroom.

Summer’s bravery flagged at the clearer sounds, audible now that they were so near the source. Her pace slowed to a stop, her hand lifting to cover her mouth. Jerry-bot was grunting and muttering little encouraging words to himself; things like ‘yeah’ and ‘take it’ and ‘I’m your daddy’ in Jerry’s unmistakable voice. His mindless babble was underscored by the rhythmic squeaking of a mattress and the thump thump thump of a headboard pounding against a wall.

Whatever spell Beth had been under snapped like a tightly wound wire and she moved forward, almost brusquely. It was her who pushed past Summer, her who led the trio to the end of the hall, and her who laid her hand against the wood of the bedroom door.

She pushed it open slowly, the scene inside the bedroom revealed in small, dramatic pieces: Clothes littered the floor beside the bed, Morty’s new skirt almost perfectly displayed dangling off the corner of the bedside table. Morty-bot’s thin arm, swung over the edge of the bed and knocking limply against the mattress as the bed shook. Her face - restful, almost peacefully lax even as it nodded jerkily with the rocking of the rest of her body, her small breasts bouncing and her legs held splayed open by two hands, huge looking in comparison to her skinny calves.

Jerry-bot was backlit impressively by the wide windows that looked out into the front yard, his face leaking artificial sweat as he pounded away between Morty-bot’s thighs. When he finally caught sight of the three horrified faces framed in the doorway, his hips stuttered as he came, noisily gasping as he stared Beth dead in the eyes.

Brav-fucking-o.

“What. The. Fuck.” Summer muttered and it shattered the thin veil of shock that had been holding everyone frozen in place.

Rick pulled a homemade pistol from his lab coat and pointed it at Jerry-bot. “Say the word and I’ll shoot,” he directed at Beth who’s vacant eyes still bore through Jerry-bot’s head unseeingly.

“This isn’t what it looks like,” Jerry-bot proclaimed, pulling out of Morty-bot with an audible squelch and tucking his genitalia behind his hand, raising the other in supplication.

“What the fuck else can it be?!?” Summer demanded, shoving past her rigid mother and wrapping Morty-bot up in the blanket her boneless body reclined across. Rick took his eyes off of Jerry-bot to cut a quick glance at her as she checked for a pulse, her shoulders drooping in relief.

“Drugged,” Rick stated as Summer curled over her sister protectively, some wordless agreement passing between them.

“Just a roofie,” Jerry-bot simpered, the hand hiding his flaccid dick jumping into the air when Rick
cocked his gun.

“How long?” Beth’s soft, level voice froze the entire room.

“The roofie? Oh, maybe half an hour…” Jerry-bot dithered but Beth spoke over him sternly.

“How long has this been going on?” Beth specified and Rick was a little surprised the words didn’t leave her mouth in a puff of condensation, her tone was so cold.

“A – a couple months?” Jerry-bot stammered.

Summer started crying, rocking Morty in her arms and petting her hair. Beth’s fingertips twitched and her eyelids trembled when she closed them and took a long, centering breath. Rick watched her with something predatory niggling at the back of his brain. Do it, Beth he urged with his gaze. Let him go.

“How long has this been going on?” Jerry-bot repeated like he was trying to negotiate, but Summer’s crying turned into loud sobs. “She – she has no idea…”

When Beth opened her eyes – hazel hard as granite - Rick felt the bear-trap slam closed. Beth’s voice was carefully light when she almost sing-songed, “Jerry, I think you need to go… away.” Rick didn’t bother hiding the cruel smile that tilted up the corners of his lips. He didn’t think he could if he tried.

“Away where?” Jerry-bot asked.

“Away,” Beth repeated vaguely. “Dad?” she turned to him and her voice was firm but beseeching. Rick glanced over his shoulder at his daughter; the rigid set of her shoulders and the fists clenched at her sides. This was the Beth he’d always hoped for. Strong and resilient but so so willing to bend to him.

“You want me to take care of this, sweetie?” Rick asked, his voice scratchy and soft and leading.

“Take care of what?” Jerry-bot intoned, ignored entirely by the group.

Beth turned to Summer who nodded her head, the motion small but steady, before two cold sets of eyes turned to him with resolve. “Would you?” Beth urged, and her tone was laced with ice. For one wild moment, Rick was standing in another house with another Beth and the hollow, indifferent look she was shooting at the robot she thought was her husband was meant for Rick too.

He shook himself out of his hallucination and his voice was rough when he answered, “With pleasure.” He shot a portal under Jerry-bots feet, who yelped as the ground disappeared underneath him, the portal irising closed over his head.

Summer and Beth stared at the place Jerry-bot had been for a solid minute before Beth frowned at Rick.

“That’s it?” she asked, hugging her elbows and grimacing at her two daughters. Summer was still clutching Morty to herself but her tears had stopped. Now she stared at Rick with red-rimmed, trusting eyes that craved guidance. A little sizzle raced up Rick’s spine. This was his element.

“He can wait. I’m more concerned with Morty.”

“Can you wake her up?” Summer demanded, rubbing at her own cheek with her shoulder to wipe away a salty trail.
“I could.” Rick tilted his head. “No-o-o-o-o-u-g-g-t sure if we should. Might be best if we let her sleep this one off while everybody… calms down.”

The three of them exchanged looks sizing each other up. Beth was still shaking, face as pale and waxy as a mannequin but her expression was level, serious, and intelligent. Rick wasn’t surprised. For all the stumbling around she’d done to get to this point she was still his little sociopath. Much like himself, love and affection didn’t affect her the same way it seemed to dictate everyone else’s lives. She had clung to Jerry out of a desire to preserve her way of life rather than because she liked his company. Now that he’d officially upended the status quo, he was disposable.

Summer’s mouth was screwed up into a fierce scowl that Rick had long become familiar with from their adventures. It was Summer’s business face, the one she wore when she was laying down hard truths and/or defending herself from people who wanted to hurt her or her family. Not for the first time, Rick wondered whether Summer might be the superior model amongst the carriers of his genes. She had clearly inherited at least some of his smarts and she was shockingly adept at kicking ass and taking names. And her empathy levels were at the right place: she wasn’t so devoid of feelings that she terrorized the neighborhood pets but her emotions seemed to inform her decisions instead of dictate them.

Entirely unlike himself or Beth who sinched their emotions off with wire-cutters, and unlike Morty who was a bleeding-heart for every sad-sack with a sob story.

Summer practically read his mind. “What’ll we do when Morty asks about him?” she queried and Rick noted her reluctance to call her father by name or title but chose not to draw attention to it. He’d let her cope how she wanted, especially if said coping involved removing herself emotionally from the man that sired her.

Before he could answer Beth asked, “What’ll we do when the police ask about Jerry?” She sighed, covering her eyes to rub at her temples with her thumb and middle finger. “Shit, Dad, what are we going to do?”

Rick tried to reassure her with a pat on her back, his other hand tipping the flask to his lips. “Do-o-o-o-u-n’t worry girls, I can take care of all of that.”

Beth glared at him under her palm but didn’t shy away from the hand on her back. “That’s vague.”

Rick rolled his eyes. “I thought you guys were recovering from trauma or whatever but if you want me to lay everything down for you right now, I will.”

Beth exchanged a glance with Summer before she nodded. “That would make me feel better,” she admitted.

Summer chimed in, “Yeah, me too,” while she straightened her back, shifting Morty slightly in her lap.

“Oh, okay fine.” Rick swept to the walk in closet and hefted out Jerry’s overnight bag, hucking the luggage onto the bed and grabbing an armload of Jerry’s clothes from the closet. “In two days I’ll go to Shoney’s-”

Beth splutterd, “What – Dad?”

Rick tsked while he dropped the gathered clothes into the travel bag. “Ah ah ah, you gotta hear me out sweetie.” He raised half his eyebrow at her and she closed her mouth so he continued, “Remember Jacob?”
“Who?” Beth asked blankly but it was Summer’s turn to roll her eyes.

“Jeezus, remember Mom? The guy who’s having a ‘human experience’ with Grandma and Grandpa.”

“Oh,” Beth frowned and Rick wasn’t entirely surprised she’d forgotten. She’d drank a lot of wine and egg nog on Christmas – hell, most of the family had - and she hadn’t even noticed Rick disappearing with Morty for most of the day to work on one of his side projects.

Rick continued, “In two days I’ll go to Shoney’s for breakfast. Jacob stops there for coffee every Friday morning. I run into him sometimes, shoot the shit. This Friday I’ll do it on purpose.” Rick paced to the dresser and grabbed a fistful of Jerry’s underwear and socks – enough to look noticeably depleted. “I’ll say, ‘Hey, how’s Jerry doing, we haven’t heard anything from him?’ and Jacob will go, ‘What, what do you mean?’” Rick shoved the socks and underwear into the open bag. “And I’ll say ‘Jerry stormed out a couple days ago. Packed a bag and everything – really upset Beth. Figured he went to your place.’”

Rick paced to the nightstand where Jerry’s watch and wallet sat next to an awkward studio picture of the family. Morty’s eyes were comically half-lidded, the photo captured mid-blink. He pulled the cash (three singles and one ancient two dollar bill) from the trifold, pocketing the money and tossing the wallet and the watch into the bag. “Jacob tells Joyce and Leonard and then if we get to take the easy route, his parents will know their piece of shit son well enough to assume he’s run away. Worst case scenario they’ll report him missing.”

Beth made a little noise of disgust. “So the cops might come anyways?”

“Yeah,” Rick glared up his unibrow at her. “But not before they’ll have found out that he was unemployed, that he had no friends, that he suspected his wife was thinking about a divorce, and that the split would leave him penniless.”

Beth shifted uneasily, crossing her arms again and studying the carpet. “Yeah, but what do I say if people start asking questions?”

“Tell ‘em the truth. Your marriage has been rocky. You’ve spent the last couple nights sleeping in different rooms and that’s not exactly uncommon.” He hefted the bag over his shoulder. “Tell them you left for work today and when you came back he and his suitcase were gone. You weren’t worried because, well, good riddance.”

Beth and Summer were frowning to themselves and exchanging looks so Rick paced to the master bathroom and collected Jerry’s toiletries: his toothbrush, his comb, his electric razor; shoving them into the overnight bag pell-mell. He raised his voice to be heard from the other room, “And I’ll be right there with you Beth.”

When he got back to the bed, Beth tilted her head skeptically and wondered, “And that’ll really work?” in a voice that clearly wanted to believe him.

The zipper slid closed over Jerry’s possessions and the whhhhhiiirrr was loud in the quiet. “Oh yeah.”

“You’ve really thought about this,” Summer observed, a sparkle of suspicion in the corner of her eyes.

Rick cocked half his eyebrow at her and played it straight. “It’s not exactly hard to make someone disappear, Summer. Especially when there’s almost no one around who’d care if they were gone.”
“And you’re sure the police will buy it?” Beth repeated, her tone telling Rick she was already most of the way on board.

“If they don’t, I’ve got a few ways to make them change their minds,” Rick shrugged and Beth’s eyes unfocused as she lost herself in thought.

“What’s that for?” Summer asked, jerking her chin at the overnight bag when Rick plopped it heavily next to her on the bed.

“Jerry’s bag,” he answered and he didn’t miss the way a certain tension deflated from both of their shoulders. He could read Summer’s thoughts on her face: she thought if Rick was packing him a bag, that meant her father was likely to stay alive to need shirts and socks and underwear. Rick wasn’t about to tell her that the bag – or more pointedly the missing items – were more for the benefit of the police in case they chose to stop and have a peek around; not when the idea so clearly made her feel better about Rick’s plan.

“And what about Morty?” Summer asked.

“We’ll tell her the same story. She knows firsthand that Jerry is a flake. Plus she doesn’t ask a lot of questions anyways.” She wasn’t likely to ask any since she would be under the impression it was all her fault. Rick hid a smile behind the lip of his flask.

“What if the police try to talk to her?” Beth followed up, and the irony wasn’t lost on him that she was suddenly so concerned about the very people she’d argued were incompetent just the day before.

Rick shrugged. “I won’t let them.” For a lot of reasons.

Summer pet Morty-bot’s bangs away from her forehead and sighed. “And we’re—” her brow pinched, her fingers combing through Morty’s messy hair jerkily. “—we’re sure we shouldn’t just hand him over to the police? There’s three witnesses and plenty of…” she paused and grit her teeth, pulling Morty a little closer to herself. “…physical evidence.” When she turned her head up, it was to catch Rick’s eyes in a half-hearted plea. “He’d get sent to jail for sure,” she stated confidently, her eyes shining with ill-placed belief.

“Jail,” Rick spat, bending over to fish Jerry’s phone out of the pants discarded on the floor. “Where he’ll call every fucking chance he gets? You thought you hated it before but do you really want to be getting those needy, obsessive voicemails from him now?” Summer cringed as Rick tossed the device on top of the overnight bag and shot a portal underneath it, vanishing it from the room.

He turned to Beth, determined to make the situation clear. “You’re married to him, Beth. You share a bank account. He’ll deplete your money by hiring lawyers and demanding retrials and you’ll have to explain to a divorce court that your scumbag husband was drugging and fucking your youngest daughter while you let him.” Beth look scandalized but Summer shot a flat glare in her direction, clearly agreeing with his point. “Oh, did you forget about those pictures? The ones you tucked into your purse and forced yourself to forget about? You turn him over to the police and they’ll want those too if you really want to make a case against him.” Beth’s lips paled, her mouth tightening into a straight line.

“Not to mention,” Rick continued heatedly, pacing in front of the windows and gesturing wildly with his flask, “the average sentence length for sexual assault is ten years, but most offenders serve half of that. Do you want him showing up at the door in five years? Do you think he’ll obey restraining orders or court orders or anything so long as he has the ability to whine and follow you around and beg for his family’s forgiveness?”
“Jeezus Grandpa,” Summer muttered and Rick realized he was panting. *Good.* The better to sell his point. He sat down heavily and ran his hands through his hair. Summer’s eyebrows tented just like Morty’s did when she was concerned about him and even Beth uncrossed her arms. Fucking performance of a lifetime, mother fuckers.

“I –” he started and then sighed. “None of our options are ideal right now. But Morty has a chance to grow up happy and normal and blissfully unaware of what happened. If there’s a chance someone can walk out of this unscathed, I think that’s the best choice we’ve got.”

Summer, her eyes watery with tears, scooted closer to him – a feat with Morty-bot still cradled in her lap – and linked her arm through his, resting her temple on his shoulder. Beth sat down on the other side of him, her hand overlapping his where it had landed on his knee.

There was almost a hint of amazement in her tone when she asked, “Do you really think we can pull this off?”

Rick scoffed, wrapping his arms around both their shoulders and guiding them to lean into him. Their concession was better than any drug, any high, any orgasm. It was euphoric. Something like adrenaline lit up the pleasure centers of his brain but it was so much sweeter. “You’ve both got *my* blood running through your veins. *You can do anything you fucking want.*”

Chapter End Notes

> Whelp, Rick is *pretty fucked up,* amirite?
Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was surprisingly hard to get Summer to unhand Morty-bot. She was insistent that her ‘sister’ be washed before they dressed her and put her in bed so Rick had obediently carried Morty-bot to the tub hefting most of her weight with his augmented left arm (his non-augmented joints screaming a silent thanks that the artificial girl only weighed the slightest bit more than the real Morty). Once she was desposited safely into the tub, he back stepped out the bathroom and into the hallway, his eyes jumping between the powered down robot and the shell-shocked teenager.

Beth shifted uncomfortably beside him. “Summer I – it should probably be me…” she started to offer but her face said everything they needed to know about how unwilling she was to wash her husband’s crimes off her daughter’s body. Not that Summer seemed any more suitable for the task to Rick. He opened his mouth to offer himself for the job but Summer cut him a glance like she knew what he was about to say and was gearing up for an argument about it so he raised his hands placatingly before closing the door all but a crack.

“Shout if you need help,” he told her through the gap and he heard her hum a firm acknowledgement. She was so much tougher than her mother already and that was a good thing; the universe wasn’t kind to weakness. Beth was living proof of that.

While the bath ran, he and Beth loitered outside the door and he purposely ignored the way his daughter fidgeted. He handed her his flask and they spent the interim ten minutes passing it back and forth, avoiding conversation.

Eventually Summer called out, “Okay Grandpa,” and he pocketed the empty flask, swinging open the door. Summer’s clothes were fairly soaked and she was panting but Morty-bot was mostly dry, wrapped in a towel at the bottom of the damp tub. Summer had twisted Morty’s hair into a bun to keep it dry and Rick realized that it wasn’t often he saw her hair up. It was cute. He hated himself for thinking it and immediately planned to make the real Morty imitate the look.

“Go-oooooouh-od work, Summer,” he chuckled, bending to catch Morty-bot under her knees and arms. Summer smirked and wiped sweat from her forehead. He groaned when his back popped, hefting the robot out of the tub. “It’s not easy to wash dead weight.”

Summer scoffed. “In a family of drunks, I have a depressing amount of experience,” she half-joked, elbowing Beth in the ribs as she passed her and Rick snorted. At least twice since Rick had moved in, he’d watched Summer struggle to clean up a belligerently drunk Beth after she’d puked on herself and more than once, Rick had passed out on the garage floor only to wake up on the couch. He always assumed he made the move mid-blackout but now he was less sure. “No really, it’s probably turning into some sort of complex,” Summer grumbled and Rick decided the next adventure he’d take her with them – someplace with a lot of beautiful aliens Summer could flirt with while Morty wandered around wide-eyed and intimidated. Summer more than deserved a break.

The two women trailed behind him into Morty’s room like ducklings. He set the robot down on Morty’s bed while Summer found the yellow pajamas her sister wore most often. Rick turned to study the pile of unfinished homework on Morty’s desk while Summer and Beth wrestled Morty-bot into sleep clothes, Beth cursing periodically while Summer grit out instructions between her teeth.

Once Morty-bot was fully clothed and tucked into bed, hair loose and fanning over the pillows, it
became obvious no one wanted to leave her alone.

“Are you sure we shouldn’t wake her up?” Summer asked again, nibbling on her thumb nail and standing at the foot of the bed.

Rick pulled Morty’s desk chair out and sat down, spreading his legs out and crossing them at the ankle. “Let her sleep it off,” Rick repeated, picking up a graded book report from her desk, a red F slanting across the top with the words ‘you could have at least finished, what’s going on with you Morty?’ scribbled next to it. “You’re both hovering.”

“Oh, and you aren’t?” Summer asked, one of her eyebrows rising.

“Difference is, Summer,” he argued, “I’m not likely to burst into tears the second she wakes up.”

Beth and Summer caught each other’s eyes. “Fair enough,” Beth shrugged, leading the way to the door. Rick flicked the stapled pages of the book report over – the second page only had a paragraph and a half on it. The last sentence ended abruptly in the middle of a thought without any punctuation. He didn’t need to be a genius to guess what happened there – he’d dragged her on an adventure and she’d never had a chance to finish the statement or the assignment or possibly even the class. “Summer, how would you feel about a glass of wine?” Beth asked with a slight slur, and Rick caught Summer’s surprised look before she scurried out the door after her mother.

“Mom! You never let me drink,” she half-chided. “And it’s the afternoon…”

“I think too-ooouh-day qualifies as a special occasion,” Beth responded, her voice receding down the stairs.

“Make it a margarita and you’ve got yourself a deal,” Summer, shot back before Rick closed the door on their conversation.

He switched on the sound barrier and ignored the hum as it overtook the room, tapping at his watch. Morty-bot’s eyes blinked open and she sat up. “Hey Rick.” She smiled when she caught sight of him. “What do you want me to do today?”

“Come on,” he said, jerking his head towards the wall as he shot a portal at it. They stepped into the bunker together, Morty-bot padding on bare feet. He pointed to the pile of clothes she’d left behind the night before – Morty’s classic t-shirt and jeans – and she got the hint, pulling the pajama top over her head. He belatedly wondered whether expanding Morty’s wardrobe would make Morty-bots comings and goings more obvious but he decided Beth and Summer would probably chalk it up to the fickle nature of teenage girls. He’d seen Summer change clothes five times in a day for no discernible reason. And besides, after the current drama wore off, he suspected everyone would go back to pretty much ignoring the youngest Smith, much as they had before.

Once Morty-bot was back in her usual attire, he pointed to the charging port and she tucked herself into her slot. “Did I do good, Rick?” she asked, scrabbling with the flap of skin that concealed the wiring on the back of her neck and plugging in her own input cord.

Rick scoffed. Even the robots around here wanted validation. “Yeah, bud, you did great,” he answered, tapping at his watch until her eyes closed and she slumped against the cabinet, the door sliding closed over her seemingly-sleeping face.

The real Morty was in exactly the same position that he’d left her. He checked his watch and the saturation of terilliam in her bloodstream. He’d been right about his estimate: almost exactly twelve hours ago he’d told himself he’d be rid of Jerry and now he was. Or almost was. There were still
some loose ends to tie together but he wanted to be sure Morty wasn’t in a complete panic when she woke up. And he wanted to get a handle on how Beth and Summer would interact with her before he disappeared for a few hours to finish Jerry off for good.

Plus he kind of liked the idea of leaving Jerry to squirm for a little while.

He picked up the pajamas Morty-bot had discarded and the warm unconscious girl, portaling them back to her bedroom where he dressed her. Once she was peacefully settled back in bed, the exchange made perfectly with no one the wiser, he flicked off the sound barrier and opened her door.

Music was playing in the kitchen, something modern and catchy, and Rick quirked his lips up as he settled back into Morty’s desk chair. The house already felt lighter without Jerry. His constant whining and his fragile ego had bogged the place down with poison miasma. Now this was Rick’s house, officially and unquestioningly. He tilted his head and glanced at Morty, her hands folded neatly over her stomach like she was a sleeping princess. Or a corpse.

Rick toed the bottom drawer of Morty’s desk open and was happy to discover Drunk Rick had left him a bottle of vodka on top of a heavily doodled binder. He topped his flask and used the empty water glass on her nightstand to pour himself a drink, the idea of hosting a house party forming in the back of his brain like cancer.

Since moving to U-694 he’d been keeping a lower profile, partially out of an interest to keep Morty safe but mostly to keep from drawing attention to himself. But with the Citadel down, and now that the house was his to do whatever he wanted with, he might finally have a chance to live it up. See some of the people he didn’t entirely hate. Show Morty off a bit. Now that he officially had a plot of land to call home base – to construct whatever protective measures he deemed necessary – maybe now he could settle down.

After he got bored of watching Morty’s steady breathing, he pulled out her computer and spent half an hour scrolling through her porn history and the other half playing her weird block game. He was just starting to kind of like it when she stirred, a long sigh escaping her nose as the very last terilliam in existence was broken down by the enzymes in Morty’s body.

Rick padded over and sat down at the edge of her bed, his weight sliding her closer to his hip. He took a sip from his glass and watched Morty’s eyelids flicker as she struggled to open them.

“Riiicccckkkk…” she mumbled thickly, one heavy arm flopping towards him and nudging his leg. “Ugh…” Rick, after a moment of deliberation, caught up her hand. Her lips tried to quirk in a smile and he smirked at how easily he could play her emotions.

Rick figured now was as good a time as any to talk to her. She would still be a little delirious from the terilliam, her memories of the events before she’d swallowed it a little blurry, and the remaining sedatives in her system might soothe her as she made the transition into her new life; the one Jerry would have no part in – the one Rick would control entirely.

“Did I…” she slurried heavily and finally managed to squint one eye open. And for how perfect his Morty-bot was, how masterfully he’d programmed it with Morty’s habits and cadence and behaviors, synthetic eyes could never quite compete with the real deal. “…get hit… by a… spaceship…again?” she finished, the words slow and far apart.

Rick chuckled. “No, Morty, I had to knock you out, remember? I had to drug you, Morty.” Her fingers twitched in his and he squeezed his hand around hers tighter. “But don’t worry, buddy. I took care of everything, just like I promised.”
It was clearly a struggle but she fought to open both her eyes as her brow furrowed. He scooted higher up her bed, sloshing a bit of vodka down his chin when he took a sip and pet at her hair. His hand wobbled when he reached out to set down the glass down on the nightstand and he glanced at the bottle. He’d already drank half of it.

Morty was so warm, the bed radiant with her heat, and the sleepy way she struggled to focus her eyes on Rick, the way her eyelids kept drooping even as her pupils darted over his face searching for some answer, was painfully endearing. He brushed her bangs away from her face and gave into the urge to press a kiss to the revealed skin of her forehead.

“No one’s going to split us up, Morty,” he vowed, shushing her when a flicker of apprehension sparkled in her eyes. “Jerry’s out of the picture now.”

Morty struggled to sit up, her hand tugging away from him as she tried to brace her elbows underneath her but he wouldn’t relinquish his grip. He knew now how much she liked the contact, the ridiculous, precious girl. She managed to shake off enough of the terilliam to lean back against her headboard and slot an anxious frown in his direction.

“You…” she started but she had to stop to clear her throat. “Dad’s gone?” she finally squeaked out, her voice scratchy and small with disuse.

“You asked me to fix it, Morty. You said you didn’t care how.”

Her wide eyes teared up and she sniffled, rolling her head on her shoulders and looking him up and down like she was inspecting his clothes for blood. “Did you…?”

“Shhhhh, Morty,” he urged instead, scooting up higher and wiping the moisture from her cheek with his thumb. “Everything’s okay now. You got what you wanted, buddy.”

A breath left Morty almost like a laugh – or maybe it was a sob - but she was still too fogged up with terilliam to express any emotion too strongly except for the tears trailing a steady path down her cheeks.

“I’m right here, Morty,” Rick promised, unlinking their hands to wrap her up in his arms. She went limply into his embrace. “I’m staying right here.”

Her shoulders started to shake but after a few minutes her arms wrapped around his torso, her warm hands settling on his back.

When Morty finally managed to support her weight with her wobbling doe legs, Rick let her lead the way downstairs. Summer’s music (it was undeniably hers; tasteless and peppy – though that might have been intentional given the ominous weight still hanging over the house) was louder on the first floor and Morty didn’t disguise her astonishment when she walked into the kitchen to find Beth and Summer dancing somewhat drunkenly around the island counter, circling an unbaked pizza crust stretched onto a cookie sheet. Summer was slinging pepperonis onto it with gusto and Beth was sprinkling mozzarella like she was making it rain.
“Whoa,” Morty breathed out quietly, bracing herself on the doorway and turning to shoot Rick a bewildered glance over her shoulder. Rick smirked around the rim of his glass and shrugged.

“MORTY!” Summer shouted, finally noticing their audience and glomping onto Morty excitedly. Rick was glad to see that she was grinning widely; whether it was a very convincing act or the after effects of the tequila he could smell on her from three feet away, he wasn’t sure. Whatever the case, Morty – ever the people pleaser – couldn’t help smiling in response, even as her face smushed against Summer’s boobs.

“There’s – uuuurp - our Morty!” Beth cheered, ruffling her youngest daughter’s hair and leaving behind an impressive amount of shredded cheese in Morty’s wavy locks.

“What’s – what’s the celebration?” Morty asked when Summer stopped smothering her. Rick slinked past them into the kitchen and picked a wayward pepperoni off the counter, popping it into his mouth.

“Mom and I decided: Wednesdays are going to be pizza and margarita nights,” Summer gushed, leaning over to press her cheek against Morty’s. The younger girl looked overwhelmed and vaguely confused but not exactly displeased with Summer’s new bout of affection.

“Where can I get one of those margaritas?” Rick asked, draining his glass of vodka in one huge gulp.

“Got you covered, Dad,” Beth answered, turning to the sticky corner surrounding their blender and sloppily filling his cup with pink slush.

“Where’s-” Everyone’s attention cut back to Morty who glanced around the kitchen, clearly searching for the missing family member. Beth clenched her teeth and Summer tensed, turning away from Morty to jerkily sprinkle more mozzarella over the sauce and getting more than half on the floor. Morty blanched under the new tension, her eyes cutting to her mother’s pointedly vacant stare and Summer’s awkwardly craned neck before her eyes landed on Rick.

Standing smack dab in the kitchen and staring her down while Beth and Summer bustled around him and avoided meeting her eyes, Rick had never felt more almighty. He was the sun, he was gravity, and now the remaining Smiths orbited him with no competition, twisting on their paths in the patterns he dictated. And Morty saw him for what he was, he could read it in the whites of her eyes as she stood frozen, small and helpless before her god. The look she pinned him with made his blood hot – like she was seeing him for the first time and finally realizing he was something to be feared, even if more than a year’s worth of experience told her there was nowhere she could run. The universe was his and she was no exception.

Morty swallowed heavily and forced out an awkward chuckle while she weakly pulled a stool out from the counter. “Well I - I think I’m gonna have to start liking Wednesdays,” she finally choked out with false bravado but Summer and Beth deflated.

Summer shoved the bag of pepperonis at Morty with a smile. “Come on, Morty, let’s load this sucker up.”

Rick marveled for the millionth time in the last couple days at his oldest granddaughter as she sang along to the music off-key enough to keep Morty fake-laughing, occasionally bopping hips with her to the rhythm. He wasn’t alone in watching the two girls; he quirked half his eyebrow at Beth who’d been observing the same display with a mix of bafflement and pride. They shared a knowing look before Rick stalked back to Morty, draping his arm over her shoulder and eating the pepperoni she’d been holding between her fingers.
She tensed under his grasp and Beth must have noticed because she asked, “You feeling okay sweetie?”

Rick felt the planes of Morty’s back ripple in a shiver before she forced herself to relax, practically muscle by muscle. “Just a little - just sore is all,” Morty muttered. Beth and Summer’s faces mirrored each other, dropping into long, pale looks of dread. Morty, sensing her misstep but not understanding it stammered, “I musta – I – I probably just slept funny. Nothing – no big deal…”

Summer glanced over her shoulder to Beth and hid her face behind a wide-lipped, novelty margarita glass as she took a sip. “Yeah, you know you really had us worried, sweetie,” Beth started, a little too drunk to be trying to come up with a convincing lie but Rick knew at this point it was more for her own benefit than Morty’s.

“I did?” Morty asked, her voice high and shaky.

Beth plowed on, “Yeah, you got sent home from school with a high fever.” Rick smiled and shot his daughter an approving nod, her demeanor brightening with his validation. “Do you remember that?”

Morty ducked her head and flattened her bangs against her forehead. “No, I – I guess I don’t,” she conceded, and Rick figured he was probably the only one in the room who caught the faint edge of horror to her tone. *That’s right Morty*, Rick gloated silently with his eyes, *I control everything.*

“I’m not surprised,” Beth continued, sipping at her own glass and gaining confidence. “You were really burning up. But you look like you’re feeling better.” Rick moved his arm down, his hand bracing Morty between her shoulder blades while Beth felt her forehead.

“I – is that what happened?” Morty asked and Rick watched his daughter tighten her smile, Summer snatching up the pizza pan to slide it into the oven, using the motion to turn her pale face away.

“That’s what happened sweetie,” Beth said firmly, patting Morty’s head and pacing away to refill her drink. “Right Dad?”

“Yu-uuuuh-p,” Rick sank into the stool next to Morty, oddly mesmerized by the light spiraling in Morty’s eyes. Her head tilted in his direction and he recognized that look from the hundreds of people he’d stomped out of existence. Shock. Disbelief. A fatalistic sort of awe. The unbearable weight of knowing *exactly* how impossible it was to escape from Rick Sanchez.

On Morty it was like an adrenaline shot straight to his heart and Rick bared his teeth at her in a wicked smile.

By the time the pizza came out of the oven, Beth was three margaritas deep and Summer managed the job of cutting it into eight steaming, cheesy pieces. Instead of carrying their plates to the dining room table, the family ate it standing around in the kitchen and laughing with Rick while he regaled them with a story about the band he, Squanchy, and Birdperson used to play in and the time they accidentally booked a gig at a Corcian bar, unknowingly putting on a performance for the same Flarbellon mafia men they’d just stolen sixty-billion grapples from.
Considering Beth and Summer had started drinking before school would have officially let out, Rick was surprised how late they managed to stay up (though he did notice Summer never refilled her glass after she finished dinner – maybe someone would finally escape the cycle of substance abuse). Chatting segued into dancing to Summer’s music and by then Morty had sloughed off enough of the last clinging dregs of the terilliam to be successfully urged into joining the party. She laughed when Summer spun her under her arm and Rick didn’t bother to hide his slightly indulgent smile. This was going to work. Well, of course it was going to work. He was a genius and a god.

Morty slowly relaxed over the course of the night – seemingly against her will. But she was so starved for love and attention and suddenly she was being showered in it. Summer kept up a near constant diatribe of thoughts and gossip and once that ran out, they scrolled through her phone together, laughing at cat memes and fail videos. Beth for once (and despite the copious amount of drinks she’d imbibed) stayed tuned in for their conversation and even laughed at a few of Morty’s pathetic attempts at jokes.

And Rick didn’t let her out of his sight. Anytime she dared to glance in his direction, he was watching her, boring into her with a heat that eventually melted the tension from her shoulders and sparked a blush on her cheeks.

By the time the two girls went up to bed together, Morty was redder than her drunk mother, her eyes half-lidded on the few occasions she gathered the nerve to meet his gaze. Rick couldn’t help but chuckle at the last beseeching glance she shot over her shoulder as she disappeared up the stairs.

Rick smirked. Odds were good he wouldn’t be sleeping alone.

Rick helped Beth clean up the kitchen and do dishes; him washing while she dried. She carefully didn’t ask anything about Jerry though he saw the thoughtful look she’d sometimes cut in his direction like it was on the tip of her tongue. But she was Rick’s daughter (technically a Rick’s daughter, not his, but still the concept remained) and she knew better that to pry into dark corners and disturb the poisonous spiders that liked the shadows.

She followed him – sedately, though a little unsteady – when he slipped out of the kitchen and into his garage.

With the door closed, she grew bold enough to try to put herself at ease.

“Everything’s… taken care of?” she asked, trailing her hand along the pile of junk that had amassed over one of the tool tables, the tips of her fingers prodding at rusted bolts and bent scraps of metal.

“A舅舅 wrapped up,” Rick assured her, hitting the button that opened the garage door and patting her shoulder as he passed. Someone had dragged the Rick-blocking satellites he’d left on the driveway the afternoon Morty had portaled to the citadel next to his workbench – probably Beth considering they were still in good condition – and he crouched to roll one back outside. Beth bent down behind the second one, assisting without needing guidance.

Since the Citadel was toast, he wasn’t too worried about other Ricks – at least for the moment – and so long as Rick stayed under the radar, interested parties would follow his trail to a dead end at the council where he’d been ‘executed’ for his crimes against Rick-kind.

Still, what was he going to do with a garage full of Rick-blockers? He may as well chuck them up into space as originally planned, just to be safe. And Rick τ-314 liked to consider himself a cautious Rick.

“What do we do now?” Beth interrupted his thoughts, lining her metal tube up next to his and tilting
her head back to take in the stars. Beth always liked to know where things were going – she got that from her mother.

“Now we can be a real family, Beth,” he answered with something almost like a shrug. Her chin dropped, hazel eyes shining with tears. “We’ll deal with everything else as it happens. We’re geniuses, it shouldn’t be too hard.” He could see the way lumping her in next to him made her shoulder’s loosen. It was them against everyone else and Beth was always so desperate to be on his team. “Trust me.”

She blew air out her nose like a laugh and they turned together to drag the next two metal tubes out onto the driveway. “Morty – she really doesn’t remember anything?” Beth wondered, her hands automatically steadying Rick’s tube when it overbalanced.

“Don’t think so,” Rick grunted, straightening the future satellite to optimal take-off position. “Hard to know since I can’t exactly ask her without giving too much away. But I wouldn’t be surprised if somewhere in her brain, wires got a little crossed.”

Beth frowned, settling the last of Rick’s devices up on its end. “What do you mean?”

He caught her eyes, two lights glinting in the moonlight, when he answered, “I wouldn’t be surprised if she struggled with boundaries. She might be overly affectionate or - or in need of more physical reassurance.” Beth was grimacing. Physical affection definitely wasn’t her thing and if she was anything like his Beth, it never had been. Of course, his statement was less about encouraging Beth to express her love and more about preparing her for any unusual behavior she might observe between him and Morty. If she didn’t want to shower her youngest daughter with kindness, that was a-okay with him, especially when the less affection Beth showed Morty, the more she would seek out from him.

Rick pulled out his phone and tapped at the screen, the metal tubes coming to life with glowing green lights and flickering whirs, their cylindrical shapes shifting, their sky facing tips pinching to points until they resembled little rockets. “I’m not a therapist, Beth,” he said the word like it was toxic, “but I don’t think Morty walked out of that bedroom completely unscathed.” He dive bombed his finger onto the green button blinking on his phone and the rockets took off, blasting into the sky and leaving skinny trails of vapor behind.

Beth silently watched the future-satellites take off until they disappeared against the black of the night sky. Once they hit the stratosphere, they would unfold into hardy bowls and start broadcasting a protective net, keeping other Ricks from portaling anywhere on earth and warning him should one enter the vacinity. Rick gave them one last fleeting glance before he turned back to the house. Beth followed him tentatively, her voice shaky when she asked, “Should we send her to therapy?”

Rick scoffed. “Oh please, those crackpots?” Beth laughed, obviously relieved, and Rick quirked half his eyebrow at her. “I don’t think it’ll be anything we can’t handle. I can give her a few hugs if it’ll keep her from locking herself in her room and dying her hair black.”
less lined than it had been the night before, though she had stared up the stairs with a sort of ominous resolve. That was when Rick remembered that Jerry-bot had taken Morty-bot to her bed, the very same one she’d shared with Jerry and was now about to sleep in alone. Rick could understand her reluctance.

Luckily he knew Beth took more after him than he was strictly comfortable with and the sort of sentimentality that distressed the general herd tended to bead up like water and run off their backs. He knew he was right when he heard the master bedroom door close quietly.

Maybe tomorrow he’d wrangle up Beth a new bed. At the very least a new mattress. A new start in life deserved that sort of upgrade. And he could think of a few planets where the two of them could discreetly set some furniture on fire in case she needed a more destructive type of closure. From what he knew about himself, she would probably like that.

Rick tapped his fingers on the banister and whistled to himself quietly. Getting rid of Jerry was going to be good for everyone. They’d see that, eventually. In the meantime, he supposed he had to make himself more available to them as the rightful family patriarch. If he left her to her own devices, he half expected Beth to find some other useless man-child to sub into Jerry’s place or for Summer to spin off the rails and wind up pregnant like her mother. It would be a little tedious but he could be the man around the house. He could make sure everyone adjusted and was having fun; a word hardly ever used in Jerry’s company.

The transition would be the hardest – fuck didn’t he know that first hand. Little things cropped up; all the crap the other person took care of that went unnoticed and taken for granted. The sudden weight of being solely responsible for your offspring with no backup to call in when you needed to tap out. If you wanted sex, you have to go out and find someone willing instead of rolling over in bed and quirking half an eyebrow. And there was nothing like crawling under cold covers every night to remind you that everyone is alone, nobody can trust anyone, and inevitably one day death will come for you, your whole life adding up to nothing more than a voiceless echo into the void.

Rick cleaned off the vodka left in his flask.

Luckily Jerry’s role in the family had been cut down to almost nothing once he’d lost his job. He didn’t even have a car – not after Rick had used the old piece of junk to make his ship – so it wasn’t often Summer or Morty asked for so much as a ride. And he was fairly sure Beth was adept at the art of self-satisfaction; she had to be after eighteen years married to Jerry.

Speaking of, Rick glanced at his watch and considered portaling to Jerry to finish him off for good but he was tired and not exactly in a rush. Jerry was probably terrified right now and that was enough to make Rick giddy. For all the times Rick had to grit his teeth and listen to Jerry whine my house-this and my family-that over the dinner table, Rick wanted to draw out his suffering a little. Really savor the moment. Because once Jerry was gone, he was gone for good.

Besides, Rick had some nigging feeling that Morty might need him tonight, that pleading look she’d cut him still burned into Rick’s brain. Fuck, even with her obvious fear and distrust, she couldn’t keep herself from looking to him for a solution. She was perfect – so perfect – and he didn’t want to miss her if she tried to find him later on.

So Jerry could wait the night.

Rick’s phone chimed and he glanced at the screen. “Satellites connected,” the message read. Perfect. One thing crossed off the list.

He wandered into his room and shucked off his lab coat and sweater, unbuckling his belt and
stepping out of his pants before he collapsed onto his cot, the blueprints pinned up to his wall wafting in the breeze of his descent. He wrestled the blanket out from underneath him only to get hit with a nose-full of flowery air when he pulled it over his shoulder.

He ignored the sparks that went off in the back of his brain and closed his eyes, determined to make Morty come to him and figuring in the meantime, a bit of sleep would be wise. Whatever he’d done in that ass-up position the night before hardly qualified as sleep and his body was screaming for some actual rest. But when he was still awake a minute later, his mind not simply powering down out of exhaustion or alcohol poisoning the way he so preferred, he growled into his lumpy pillow.

Without really meaning to, he pulled up the video feed of Morty’s room. Just to check up on her. She might be masturbating and that was always nice to watch. Or, considering the events of the last twenty-four hours, she might be in some super emotional state; crying into her pillow or listening to sad music or otherwise wallowing in teen angst. And if she was, it would be smart to go lay down with her and comfort her, reassure her of his presence and remind her that he didn’t have to be so threatening if she’d just behave.

But her room was empty, her sheets rumpled like she’d just climbed out of bed. He jolted up, the cot groaning underneath him as he frantically studied the coordinates of her tracker. He hated himself deeply for his panic when he realized she was still in the house, still upstairs, and less that twenty feet away from where he’d been looking for her.

She was in Summer’s room, the two girls squeezed together in Summer’s twin bed under the covers. A magazine was laying open on her pillow and they were both leaned up on their elbows to study it in the soft light of the bedside lamp.

“Oh, you’d look cute in that,” Summer murmured, keeping her voice low and cozy, pointing a finger at something on the page.

“Oh jeez, I don’t know,” Morty stammered back, her feet wiggling under the covers. Her tone was insecure but hopeful when she added, “You think?”

“Yeah,” Summer encouraged. “You’ve got super model boobs so you could pull it off.”

Morty chuckled. “Super model boobs? You mean – that’s just a nice way of saying I’m flat as a board.”

Rick grinned distantly at that.

“It’s a nice way to say you don’t have to wear a bra,” Summer corrected, leaning over on her elbow until she was facing her sister. “Plus, there’s no way Jessica wouldn’t notice you in something like that.”

“Oh… right,” Morty trailed off, for once not glowing at the mention of her crush/obsession. “… Jessica.”

Summer raised her eyebrows and Rick, turning over on his cot and blocking out the half-image of the ceiling, mimicked her expression. “Uh oh. Something happen, Morty?”

“No – no, nothing happened,” Morty insisted, resting her chin on her crossed forearms. “I guess I was just thinking – you know – maybe Jessica’s out of my league.” Morty shrugged and Rick didn’t need to see her face to know her lips would be tilted in that funny little self-deprecating smile that had charmed an alarming amount of aliens on their adventures (a fact Morty was utterly ignnorant of, thank fucking christ).
Summer scoffed, the picture of sisterly protectiveness. “More like you’re out of hers.” *Cheers to that,* Rick agreed in his head.

“No really. She’s –” Morty started and she wasn’t crying, her voice wasn’t thick in the way it got when she was fighting back tears, but it was sad in an empty, unusually bitter kind of way. “I don’t think she likes girls. And – and if she did it might only be to – you know – have some fucking three-way to convince her boyfriend she’s *adventurous,* you know?” *Oh. So she *had* been listening when Rick dropped those unhappy truth bombs. Good.* “I just - I don’t want *Brad* there watching when I get my first kiss.” Rick’s fingers twitched against his stomach.

Summer’s eyes were a wide like she hadn’t expected Morty to have that kind of insight but she recovered fast. “Okay then. Someone else you have in mind for that first kiss?”

Morty blushed and ducked her face into the mattress. Rick was *riveted.*

“I – Maybe,” she said into the sheets, her voice muffled but Rick would have heard those words from fucking Pluto for how clearly they rattled around in his head.

“You gonna tell me who it is?” Morty shook her head and Summer hid a friendly laugh behind her hand. “Do I know them?” Morty shook her head even harder and Summer raised an eyebrow skeptically but had enough mercy to move on. “Well, do you think they’d be interested? In kissing you, I mean.”

Rick watched the Morty-shaped lump under Summer’s blankets deflate with a heavy sigh. “I… I doubt it. They – they’re definitely not…” Morty unburied her head from her arms and studied the teal nail polish on her fingernails. “I don’t really know. It’s complicated.”

Summer (the completely useless idiot) didn’t pry like she was obviously supposed to and left Morty’s confession at that, changing the subject to Jeremy or Jason or whoever the fuck her crush-of-the-week was. Morty listened raptly, turning to rest her cheek on her arm and listen to her sister chat, a quiet look of wonderment widening her eyes.

Rick rolled over and stopped listening, half staring at the dark ceiling of his room and half watching Morty’s small back rise and fall under Summer’s pink bedspread.

So she wanted to kiss him, did she? Rick palmed himself absently through his boxers, the thought not exactly displeasing.

Rick really wasn’t the biggest fan of kissing. Sure, he’d get shit-faced drunk and rage-make-out with a stranger in a dark bar every once in a while, but he wasn’t really *into* it. As a whole he found it wet and uncomfortable and too fucking intimate. Why did he need to be that close to someone else’s face? What if they head-butted him when he closed his eyes? That had happened often enough for it to become a problem somewhere in his late 20’s so the thought wasn’t completely unfounded.

Overall, no thanks, Rick was good without kissing. Better than good. Fucking grand.

The low *groan/thud* of the air conditioner turning on sent the blueprints on his wall ruffling as a cool breeze raised the hair on his arms. His fingertips traced an old scar on his stomach – the one he’d gotten from a bar fight when he was too young to know a piece of glass in the gut felt like fire. He’d stitched it up himself which had sucked something fierce because he hadn’t been drunk enough to ignore the feeling of the needle weaving in and out of his skin and he’d had to take a break mid-surgery to vomit, his heaving stomach tearing at the half completed sutures. But at the time, there hadn’t been anyone else he’d allow to see him bleed.
Summer turned over and flipped her light out, the room dropping into the dark blues of nighttime. Morty rolled onto her side away from Summer whose big eyes still glistened in the dark.

If Morty wanted to try kissing… he’d consider it. He had promised he’d take all her firsts, hadn’t he? It’d be a hot day on Mars before Morty would even think about head-butting him in the middle of a kiss so at least there was that going for it.

And if holding her hand made her eyes turn black, what would she think of a kiss?

That was a pleasant enough thought to play out while he drifted, Morty’s deep even breaths a steady metronome to send him off to sleep.

He woke up to his phone buzzing an obnoxious screech that he couldn’t remember programming to any of his normal alerts. He hadn’t set an alarm so he couldn’t imagine why his phone was trying to melt his brain to mush with its unbearable screaming. Usually he’d assume it was something he’d done in a blackout, but he had crystal clear memories of falling asleep the night before.

His phone wasn’t on his nightstand where he usually left it if he’d set some kind of wake-up call. It wasn’t in the sheets like it might be if he’d fallen asleep watching porn. So that meant it had to be on the floor, still in his pants pocket, lost amongst the discarded bottles and half-completed inventions he’d cast aside. He rolled off the bed and crawled to the pile of clothes behind the door, struggling to find his slacks and then the right pocket without entirely opening his eyes.

Once he’d pretty much turned his pants inside out and devolved to shaking them upside down and letting the contents of his pockets come to him, the beeping phone was the last thing to tumble out, bouncing off the carpet and skidding against his knee.

He dismissed the noise with the volume button but the alert that flashed on the screen confused him. “DNA detected,” it blinked in brilliant green letters too bright in his dim bedroom. What the fuck.

DNA detected…

He crawled to his nightstand and found a pharmacy bottle in the top drawer, shaking out two orange pills onto the counter top where they skittered away from him. DNA detected… hmm. He used the bottom of a glass to smash the pills to a fine powder and pinched a nostril to snort them straight off the wood, sniffling at the uncomfortable grainy feeling of nasal drip.

DNA detected.

Oh fuck DNA detected! He sprang to his feet and dressed in a hurry, wiping at his nose with the back of his hand. He was still tugging on his lab coat when he slammed his door open and followed the sounds of morning grumbling to the dining room table.

“Morty!” he half-shouted, relieved despite himself at the sight of the girl digging into a bowl of cereal, milk dribbling over the edge of her spoon as she froze at the sight of him careening around the corner.
“Yeah Rick?” she perked up to attention but Summer shushed them both.

“Mom’s still sleeping,” Summer said in a whisper, jerking her head towards the couch. Rick could just make out the top of a blond head peeking over the arm. Seemed Beth hadn’t been able to sleep in her bed after all. Rick made a mental note to take her out tonight and get her something new and less haunted by the ghost of her mistakes and then added a footnote that those plans were dependent that he not die before the end of the day at the hands of another Rick. And considering the warning still vibrating on his phone, he wasn’t about to put down money on that bet.

Especially when the urge to protect the house that was so completely his now was already overruling his time tested instinct to flee. But he had to hide Morty first. Beths and Summers tended to be largely ignored by Ricks, an unspoken mutual agreement very few Ricks broke, but Morties were free game, especially a rare one like the girl staring at him a little blankly over her bowl of cereal. He had to get her into the bunker.

“Come on, we gotta go Morty,” he insisted, grabbing her by the wrist and tugging her to her feet. She dropped her spoon into the bowl with a clatter and let him drag her up from the table without complaint but a shadow passed across the dining room, something large eclipsing the light filtering in through the window and Rick turned in time to watch a ship – not so very different from his own – land in the driveway right next to his. “Fuck! Come on,” he pulled his portal gun from his pocket and was raising it to the wall when their unexpected visitor became visible, following the same trail between the garage and the front door Rick’s feet had cut into the grass. Ice blue met ice blue and for half a second, the world tilted unexpectedly, Rick’s mouth falling open into a surprised grimace.

The other him quirked half a unibrow and glanced down at a tablet frowning, the look of it almost familiar but not quite. Summer, noticing he was no longer looking at her but behind her, turned to see what had caught his eye.

“What the hell?” she breathed faintly against the glass, and Rick had no ground to disagree.

The female Rick – the Ric his brain supplied without prompting - lifted her eyes back up to the window and scowled, her gait purposeful as she marched to the door and rang the bell.

Chapter End Notes

Since I think I’ve got the rest of this sucker just about fleshed out, I’m picking up the update speed! I’ll be pushing chapters out a little faster so stay tuned for more!

And as always, thanks for reading!
“Grandpa, who is that lady,” Summer asked tentatively when no one reacted to the doorbell except for the slight twitch Rick made to tighten his hold on Morty’s wrist. “And why does she look so much like-”

“Sum-Sum, don’t you have school to go to or something?” he asked blandly, mind humming through the possibilities because what? Whatever he’d been expecting, whatever he’d been ready to fight, it definitely wasn’t a female Ric. “Why don’t you go out the back door.”

“You’re being real weird,” Summer snapped back in answer, crossing her arms and glaring. Rick spared her a grimace before he dragged Morty with him to the window where he struggled to see around the bushes to the figure on the front stoop.

Insidious curiosity marched up his spine. What the fuck was a Ric doing here? They were a lot less common than Ricks - almost one to one-thousand odds as far as Rick could guess - and Rick had only come across a handful of them since he’d started dimension hopping. They were just as brilliant, just as bitter, and just as deadly – a run in with them usually added up to more problems than what would accrue facing off against any other Rick (for reasons he never bothered to look too deeply into) so he’d always been reluctant to get involved or ask too many questions. It was pretty easy considering they tended to stay to themselves so one showing up on his doorstep in a fucking spaceship was beyond the scope of Rick’s educated guesses.

If it were any other Rick, he would have assumed their appearance had to do with the stunt he’d pulled at the Citadel, Morty would already be in the bunker, and Rick would be firing up the best of the house’s defenses... butrics loathed Ricks. There was no way she was on the payroll of those Citadel bozos and even if she had been, those clowns were dead.

“Who is it, Rick?” Morty asked and Rick spared her a fleeting glance before tugging her a little closer to his hip.

“Shhhh – shut up Morty,” he hissed back, jerking the curtains back over the window and backing away from the potential blast zone.

There was still something niggling in a corner of his brain, a parallelism that Rick just couldn’t ignore and that raised the fine hairs on the back of his neck: Rics also almost unanimously abstained from pairing up with Morties but it couldn’t be a coincidence that a lady-Rick was knocking on the door to one of the few houses in the multiverse that housed a girl-Morty.

The doorbell rang again, three times in quick succession. Beth grumbled from the couch and sat up, her eyes still squeezed shut as a hand massaged her forehead. “Kid’s? Can someone get that?” Summer shot him a hesitant look before she started towards the door. Rick blocked her path with one long arm braced against the doorframe.

“Woah there, that might not be the best idea,” he said, catching Summer around her waist when she tried to side-step around him. Morty was yanked along by her wrist, her round eyes confused but resigned as she shuffled along with his pulling. She, unlike her sister, had picked up on his unease and kept her full attention on him, her early morning sleepiness sloughing away as she braced herself for a fight - Rick could tell from the rigid set of her shoulders and the extra wide-eyed look she cut to
the front door and the surrounding room.

At least she’d learned something after a year and a half.

Summer, on the other hand, was trying to pry his arm from around her waist but he tightened his grip, heaving her off the ground and turning so he was once again bodily between her and the foyer. When he let her go, she backed up a step to cross her arms and quirk an eyebrow. “What is going on grandpa? Who is that lady?” Summer asked again but before Rick could answer her, the Ric shouted through the door.

“I can he-eeuuur-ar you idiots talking in there!” Her voice was rough like his, and a little deeper than most women her age, but the cadence was unmistakable, even to his own ears. “And I saw you through the fucking window, Rick, so open up. I swear I won’t shoot you,” she promised, followed by a quieter, “…probably.”

“What, you think I didn’t hear that?” he demanded. Rics were… complicated. Male Ricks were easy – he had an in-system manual for manipulating, controlling, or avoiding them. But Rics were different. Unpredictable. Whether the world wanted to admit it or not, being born with a vagina set them on a different track.

“I wanted you to hear;” the Ric shouted back and the light in the foyer dimmed when she pressed her face against the fogged glass of the door. “That’s why I fucking said it.”

“Rick?” Morty asked, a quaver in her voice and he cut a sharp look down to her anxious face. He had been fairly sure that Summer and Beth wouldn’t register as something of notice to a Rick (it was a vaguely upheld unspoken agreement that a Rick didn’t fuck with another Rick’s family) but this was a whole different situation and he was weighing the merits of throwing all three of the Smiths through a portal to the bunker.

He raised his voice to snap “And you think that’s going to make me want to open the door?” sarcastically at the woman on the other side. But before he could make up his mind about the portal, Beth staggered over, her hand covering a yawn.

“Come on, Rick, I just want to talk,” Ric shouted again, the blurry shape of her arm rising to the doorbell again and pressing it repeatedly. So close to it, the sound was gratingly loud and he saw Beth cringe out of the corner of his eye. “And, you know, I could just blast the fucking door down but I’m trying to be polite.”

“Oh for heaven’s sake,” Beth grumbled, rubbing her eyes as she sidestepped the hand Rick shot out too late to hold her back. One last aborted, “Beth, no,” slipped from between his lips before a stripe of early morning sunlight cut the foyer in two.

The door swung open and there she was in all her glory. Ric: arms cocked on her hips in a too familiar pose, her face twisted into a scowl as cold as steel. “Hel-lo...” Beth started strong but trailed off slowly, blinking at the woman on the stoop.

For how strange it was to be looking at a gender-swapped version of himself, and for how much he hoped Beth and Summer wouldn’t be able to connect the dots, Rick knew she was unmistakable for what she was. She too wore the long white lab coat and a teal sweater, though hers looked to be of a finer quality and dipped at the neckline. However the slight change in style wasn’t as noticeable as the medium-small breasts tenting it, and he watched all three Smith women dip their heads in a not-so-subtle body scan. Ric’s blue/grey hair was combed and pulled back into a low bun and her eyes were rimmed with the faint smudges of makeup but even with an extra X chromosome, she hadn’t dodged the unibrow.
It was probably the unibrow that gave her away.

He recognized the glare on her face as she glanced around at the scene in the foyer – boredom and aggravation dropping her eyelids to half-mast. It was the same one he’d been watching age in the mirror for the last seventy years. He knew it by fucking heart.

Rick’s hand dropped into the pocket currently housing a laser pistol as he reminded himself that if he shot her in the head right now, he’d never find out what brought her here in the first place. And if there was something going on he didn’t know about, he needed to find it out.

“Dad…” Beth asked, backing away as Ric let herself in, closing the door softly without turning her back.

“More like ‘Mom’ but not quite,” Ric quirked half her eyebrow at Beth and Rick watched her shutter the aggravation into something more accommodating. “Not in this dimension at least.”

“Woah,” Morty whispered and Ric swiveled at the sound of her voice, her attention a laser point focused on Morty. Jeezus, Ricks and their fucking Morties. Of course this had something to do with Morty. All the more reason to keep the intruder alive long enough to ask questions.

“Grandpa, who’s this?” Summer’s tentative voice spoke over his shoulder. He could feel her shift slightly out from behind him to better take in the unimpressed female scientist flatly glaring into Rick’s eyes.

Rick resisted the urge to knead at his forehead. Instead, he bent his neck until it cracked and traced the handle of his pistol with his fingertips. “This… is an alternate version of me from another dimension.” he grit out between his teeth. Great, now the whole family knew. He fucking hated explanations. “There’s a lot of them running around.”

“Yeah but this one’s a girl…” Morty said with a grating tone of awe. Ric cocked a little grin at her, something genuine that melted years off her face, and Rick turned to angle his body between them.

“They’re… not as common,” Rick settled on and Ric scoffed, the noise absurdly similar to his own. “Grandma Rick,” Summer laughed, her muscles relaxing, and Rick didn’t know how he felt about the fact that the family assumed another him couldn’t possibly mean them harm. Didn’t they know anything about him? “That’s cool.”

“Less ‘cool’ than it is irritating, Summer. Like hearing your own voice on an answering machine but on a personal level,” the Ric quipped, glaring hard at Rick – something he returned with fervor. Morty chuckled and Rick’s hand tightened around the handle of the gun in his pocket. “Name’s Ricarda,” the doppelganger introduced herself lightly and Rick felt Morty shift behind his back. “But I go by Ric.”

“Ricarda,” Morty repeated faintly and Rick gnashed his teeth.

“Right then,” Beth seemed to shake herself out her daze, stepping aside and gesturing to the dining room. “Would you… like to come in for breakfast?” Beth was nothing if not adept at rolling with the punches.

“That’s so sweet of you Beth but I’m actually here on business,” Ric answered with the female version of the sugar sweet tone he used on Beth when she was handling unhealthy doses of strange with remarkable good form. “I’m here to see Morty.” Rick felt the girl jerk, his fingers still wrapped around her wrist. “And… Rick,” she said his name like she’d rather be spewing vodka and stomach bile into a toilet bowl. She rolled her eyes and Rick hated her for it. “Apparently.”
“Oh,” Beth answered faintly, casting unsure eyes back to him. “Dad?”

“Everything’s fine, sweetie,” he replied stiffly, his full attention on the unwanted guest.

“Then we’ll just…” Beth collected Summer by the shoulders and steered her towards the living room even as both their heads swiveled to keep gaping, “get out of your hair…”

Once Beth and Summer had turned into the other room, Ric’s sugary façade dropped and Rick’s hand holding his pistol twitched.

“My genes do not do any favors for a broad,” Rick taunted, getting his first prolonged look at his female doppelganger. She had the same wrinkles at the corner of her eyes as he did, the same pale, unhealthy hue to her skin, the same wild eyes. Other versions of himself never really freaked him out the way lesser men might respond to finding their doppelganger, but this one – Rick knew another predator when he met one.

“Hey I – I think she’s pretty!” Morty jumped to her defense and Ric’s thin lips tilted up at the comment. And Rick, thinking about stupid Jessica and her stupid fucking tits, felt his face lengthen in a scowl.

“Why don’t we take this outside,” Ric suggested nodding her head towards the door. Rick scowled in agreement, his fingers loosening around Morty’s wrist. He was about to send her to the bunker but Ric turned and caught Morty up in the kind of conspiratorial look that Rick knew would entice her because he used it himself all the fucking time. “Come on, Morty,” she urged, swinging the door open wide.

Morty – stupid, trusting Morty – lurched in the direction of the sunlight and Rick re-tighten his grip, keeping her carefully beside him as they stepped out into the morning sunshine and the front door closed with a dull thud.

Rick glared in the morning sunlight. His doppelganger wore a similar expression and crossed her arms, refusing to give them space on the stoop by stepping down. Her cold blue eyes swept over him and Rick’s skin prickled – jeezus nothing made him angrier than someone sizing him up. She scowled at the place where Rick’s hand wrapped around Morty’s wrist before she snapped, “What are you doing here, Sanchez?”

Rick put his unoccupied hand on his hip and glowered at his doppelganger with all the frigidity of his self-hatred. “I live here.”

“No, you don’t,” she Ric asserted, shoving him in the chest with a finger. Rick’s self-control wobbled dangerously. “You don’t belong here.”

Morty, completely ignorant of the tension, glanced between the two of them avidly and perked up in his defense. “Yeah, he does! Last year he – At the beginning of last year he moved in with us,” she stammered. She clasped a fist full of his lab coat with the hand he held against his side and Rick hated how grounded that small point of contact made him feel.

Ric looked between the two of them and then consulted her tablet with a put-upon sigh, fishing a flask out of her breast pocket and throwing back a big gulp. Whatever she found on her tablet made her unibrow dip down into a V and she rolled her eyes again before she crouched down to Morty’s level, two pale, long-fingered hands reaching out to rearrange the girl’s headband to center. Morty looked surprised, but not unhappy with the attention. Rick, boiling with her blasé handling of his Morty, yanked the gun out of his pocket and was about to point it at Rick but quick as a snake, she caught his hand, twisted his wrist until the weapon dropped and jabbed his palm with a thick little
stylus, drawing blood. Absently she kicked his pistol into the bushes next to the porch.

“Bitch!” Rick said, more in indignation than pain but Ric already had a gun in her own hand, the barrel centered on his forehead.

“Hands where I can see them,” Ric insisted, her eyes on the fat drop of blood dripping off the end of her stylus. She stood up to her full height and stepped out range of his long arms, pulling out a device about the size of a television remote and sliding the stylus into an empty slot while Rick surreptitiously studied his nanobot readouts for poison.

Rick realized what she was doing a moment too late.

She scoffed and grinned, her mouth splitting into a Cheshire grin. “Yu-uuuugh-p. And that’s what I thought—” she consulted her device, “-Tau three-one-four. This isn’t your dimension. What the fuck are you doing in U-694?”

Rick was uncomfortably aware of the way Morty’s body stiffened next to his, tension rippling through her body. It started in the hand clenched in his lab coat and traveled up her arm, her face scrunching up in confusion, her legs wobbling underneath her. He steadied her with the grip on her wrist. “This isn’t…” She breathed out a long shaky sigh and he squeezed her arm, willing her to shut up. She cut her eyes up to Rick and he watched the universe collapse in the black stretch of her pupils. “You’re not…”

Rick tore his eyes away from Morty to snap at Ric, “So what, can’t a guy dimension hop?” Morty cast her eyes to the ground and unclenched his lab coat like it was a blanket infested with small pox. Rick refused to turn down to look, to give Ric the satisfaction, to take his eyes of the obvious threat, but his face stiffened in a furious mask.

Ric tucked her dimension detector away and tilted her head. She was practically smarmy when she announced, “You have no rights to this Morty.”

Morty shifted, sidestepping away from Rick, and red bled into the corners of his vision.

“Is that what you’re after?” he growled, the covetous creature inside of him slamming at the walls of the cage. He wound his fingers tighter around Morty’s wrist and yanked her hard enough that the dazed girl stumbled into his side. “A super rare girl-Morty so your genitalia can match?”

Ric scoffed. “I’m with a special branch of Morty Protection Services and you’re going to have to come with me.” She reached under her lab coat and revealed a set of shiny silver cuffs.

“You’re a social worker?” Rick asked incredulously, quirking half his eyebrow and scoffing right back at her, louder to make a point of it. What sort of self-respecting Rick chose to become a social worker? “Not gonna happen.” Morty was almost dead weight against his side, leaning as far away from him as she could – which wasn’t very far, he refused to give her an inch to budge away. Her shoulders were rising and falling, gaining speed as the nanobots politely informed him her heart rate was spiking.

Ric didn’t break his eye contact to glance at Morty either but he could tell she was aware of the girl’s distress from the way she rolled her shoulders, pistol still aimed at Rick’s head. She canted her hip and tilted her head. “Tau three-one-four…” she mumbled, almost to herself, her eyebrow tilting into a V. “Tau three-one-four… haven’t I heard of you somewhere?”

“I’m pretty popular in the red light dimension. You wanna find out why?” he taunted and the flat blink she cut him was wholly unimpressed.
“Whatever, I’m taking you in,” she replied, opening the cuffs with a quick flick of her wrist. “Let go of Morty.”

Rick tightened his grip around Morty’s wrist and pulled her against him, the girl shifting limply into him. “Taking me in where?” he growled, furious beyond belief. “The Citadel is a pile of fucking rubble.”

Ric smirked and cocked her pistol. “I never said anything about the Citadel.”

Then she squeezed the trigger.

Rick had been expecting pain – a lot of pain – he’d been shot plenty of times and it was never a pleasant experience. He supposed in a lot of ways he’d deserve that for underestimating a Rick just because this one came with a uterus. But he didn’t feel anything akin to pain. Maybe he was finally dead. Maybe this was death. After a lifetime chasing after it, teasing the line and challenging the gods, he’d finally stumbled into the abyss.

His brain fuzzed out comfortably and he kept waiting for his body to fall, to feel the brains blow out the back of his head, to watch the light tunnel to blackness, but none of that happened.

His hand did loosen from around Morty’s wrist and drop to his side but his knees didn’t crumble underneath him the way he figured they would. Instead, a strange euphoria washed through him, the grass suddenly rolling peacefully in waves that crested against the sidewalk, the blue of the sky overwhelmingly soft and warm where it brushed against his face. Morty’s hair was woven with sunshine and when she opened her mouth, long melodious vowels fell off her tongue like drops of butterscotch. The woman in the mirror swam in front of him and around him until their edges blurred together.

A ship sailed closer, bouncing at the peaks of the waves of turf, the sunlight sparkling on the metal hull like glittering diamonds, the brightness almost unbearable except for how delightfully bitter it tasted against his teeth. The world slanted and he was caught in the embrace of a warm leather glove, the press of it against his cheek as comforting as if someone had reached into his chest and cupped his cybernetic heart in their hands.

Warbling voices, the words indistinguishable, echoed in his glass bubble as the bluest sky morphed in fantastic swirls of pearlescent rainbows to the most brilliant expanse of stars.

Rick turned his neck, his head suddenly uncomfortably heavy. Morty’s starlight eyes were boring into him across a turgid sea of doubt, a nebula of sticky fear and bottomless sadness reflecting through the cosmos to pin him in place like a scarab in a display case.

He blinked and the nebula was gone – well not quite gone, Morty’s eyes were still wide and alarmed, peering at him over the almost familiar leather passenger seat. She shifted awkwardly under his gaze and his eyes dropped to her lap where she clutched his portal gun tightly between her hands.

“Aaaaaaaaaand he’s back,” a grating female voice spoke and Rick shook himself the rest of the way out of unexpectedly tripping balls.

Rick groaned as he sat up, irked to find his hands cuffed behind his back. Fuck, he’d wound up in cuffs too many fucking times over the last couple of days and it was really starting to wear on his nerves. He coughed to clear the car sparkles or whatever the fuck he’d hallucinated out of his throat. “What the fuck did you drug me with and where can I get some of that shit?”

“Trade secret,” Ric laughed, her eyes meeting his in the rearview mirror. “Good stuff though, isn’t it?
Last time I hit it, I thought moonbeams were trying to fuck my brains out and I was into it.” She sighed and Rick twisted his wrists behind his back, looking for give, checking to make sure he couldn’t slip his hands out of the loops. No such luck, they were on uncomfortably tight, metal cutting into the thin skin over his bones. “It’s still one of my go-to’s in the old spank bank and that was fucking years ago.”

“Gross,” Rick grumbled, cutting his eyes back to Morty and internally screaming when she jerked her head back around, pointedly ignoring him. “By the way, thanks for the back-up, Mooooorty.”

Her shoulders became a tight line and Ric scowled. “It’s not her fault you’re a degenerate piece of shit.”

“It’s not my fault she’s fucking useless.” Rick shifted in his seat, scooting over until he was sure he was in Morty’s peripheral. From the new angle, he could see a plastic evidence bag next to her feet, packed to the brim with the previous contents of his pockets. He growled, “She’d be a waste of your time, you know. Can’t even tell the difference between a sack of flurbos and a pile of rusty nuts.”

Rick ignored the slow grin cresting Ric’s face to focus on the pointed way Morty fidgeted with the portal gun. Get us out of here, he willed her silently. Turn around and hand over the portal gun. “You are deeply mistaken about me and the nature of my visit but go ahead and keep talking; it’s hilariously transparent.”

The glass done of the ship tinkled, grains of moscovium flittering off the windshield. The ship passed dangerously close to a satellite Rick recognized as his own and Ric cut him a look over her shoulder. “This little trick yours?” she asked as the scrap of metal whizzed by. “That why I couldn’t portal in?” Rick tried his hardest to express his desire to give her the middle finger with just his eyes. “Not bad,” she conceded, ruffling Morty’s hair until the girl whined and loosened her white fingered grip on the portal gun. “But not good enough.”

Then Ric hit a prominent green button on the dash and a portal big enough to fit the ship bloomed in their path. “Nice tech,” Rick begrudgingly admitted. Personally, he was a portal or ship kind of guy; he didn’t like the idea of leaving portal technology unprotected – hell he was still brooding over the fact that his gun rested against Morty’s trembling thigh. But slipping through the green swirl and exiting into a completely different stretch of stars where a huge round space station glowed impressively with warm artificial light was begrudgingly impressive.

“Where are we?” Morty asked, awed by the glass domed station slowly eating up the black stretch of space out the windshield while Rick groped between the seat cushions for something to get him out of the cuffs. Even if she was a chick she was a Rick and there had to be something she’d forgotten about that he could use. “You said you’d answer my questions,” Morty added petulantly and Rick bristled. So that was why she wasn’t shooting them a portal and getting them the fuck out of there, because this bureaucratic bitch promised her answers. He cursed Morty vehemently in his head.

But at least she wasn’t stupid enough as not question her own location and Rick consulted his coordinates blinking in his periphery. He wasn’t surprised to find the readout practically gibberish to him, the numbers and letters mixed up in an order he’d never seen before and half of them alien. They were way off the map. So far off that his computer had to redefine the math that plotted their location and create a whole new classification system.

Great.

“This is the Palisade,” Ric said with aplomb, self-satisfaction dripping from her voice. Rick made sure she was looking at him before rolling his eyes dramatically.
His fingers found something sticky but ultimately useless between the backrest and the seat cushion and he felt the lines of his face deepen in a grimace. He hadn’t expected to get off so easy – Ric seemed abnormally competent, even for a Rick - but it was hard to ignore his disappointment.

“Looks like the Citadel two-point-oh to me,” he said flatly, dreading what an alternate Citadel might want with him and his Morty when he’d been so close to the epicenter of the destruction of his own. And the space station really did smack of the old home-base. Round instead of pointed, sure, but the great glass dome sloping over the city looked about the same.

Ric laughed a hard cackle and took a swig from her flask. “No, the Citadel is a steaming pile of gift-wrapped crap on a garbage barge compared to the Palisade.”

“Sure looks like the Citadel,” Rick taunted from the back seat. He was peripherally aware that there were other Citadels – of course there were, probably infinite Citadels, that was the nature of a multiverse – but he’d only ever seen or heard of the one. His adventuring hadn’t taken him far enough off the grid to find another but a quick glance at the nonsense that made up his coordinates hinted that he’s stumbled so far off the map, he’d fallen right off the table.

“If it’s not the Citadel – what is it?” Morty asked as the ship skidded through a shimmering force field into a hangar filled with varied space crafts. “What is the Palisade?”

Rick caught sight of another Ric lounging against a spacecraft dressed in a flightsuit, a flask at her lips as she watched their ship land. He could dimly see the ghost of his own scowling face in the reflection of the window. What were the odds of two Rics in the same port?

“If it’s the Palisade it’s the Palisade,” Ricki answered, something uncomfortably sincere in her voice as she turned to brace a hand on Morty’s shoulder. Rick thought pretty hard about kicking her hand off - it was doable, his foot was right there - but he’d already shown too many of his cards and the small victory wouldn’t amount to much except self-satisfaction and maybe a set of leg manacles. He didn’t want to decrease his future odds of escape but it was still very hard to keep his foot on the ship floor.

So instead of demanding she take her fucking hand of his Morty like the vicious snake coiling around his ribs demanded he do, he snarked, “Sounds like someone swallowed the cool-aid.”

Ric didn’t even glance back at him which stung a bit – Rick didn’t like being ignored. What was worse was when Morty made a show of avoiding his angry gaze and focusing neon bright eyes on Ric like she was the new center of her universe. “Come on Morty,” Ric encouraged with a warm smile utterly foreign on a face that looked so similar to Rick’s. “You’ll see.”

Whatever Rick had been expecting, it wasn’t for two armed and uniformed Rics to approach the ship, cold blue gazes already locked on him. There were more of them here? More female-Ricks? Rick was starting to get an idea of what The Palisade actually was, and he really wasn’t sure how he felt about the revelation – or the obvious reason why Ric would want to bring Morticia here.

He felt slightly mollified that the girl did glance back at him before she climbed out of the car, a quick, inquisitive, checking-in kind of look that he glowered back at. She stepped back from the door, her eyes glued to him – just how he liked it – until Ric came around the ship and wrapped an arm around her shoulders, leading her away. Morty brown eyes made one last peek at him over Ric’s arm before she turned and let the old woman guide her forward.

The two guards manhandled him from the back of the ship and the strange sense of deja-vu wasn’t lost on him. Here he was again being escorted on either side by two white-uniformed guards, though the women flanking him didn’t make the same mistake of leaving their weapons holstered within reaching distance. In fact, they seemed significantly more alert as they pushed him to follow Ric and
Morty, stumbling with his arms cuffed behind him.

“Hands off,” he growled when they grasped him by his elbows but they ignored his demand, tightening their grip when he tried to shake them off. Morty’s steps faltered at the sound of his voice and she instinctively turned to wait for him but Ric was insistent, her palm soothing the bare skin below Morty’s t-shirt sleeve in long gentle strokes. Rick would have sawed off his left hand if it meant he’d still have the right one left to strangle her with.

He was shaken out of his brooding when his brief hypothesis about the space station was proven correct almost the moment they stepped through the hanger door and out onto a small, busy street.

The Palisade was a city of Rics.

And not just Rics, Rick realized as his eyes darted between mismatched pairs. Morticias too.

At least a dozen Rics and Morticias walked along the street – many more Rics than Morticias but enough that his Morty didn’t garner much attention. Up the street, a Ric tugged a short haired Morticia along by a grip around her upper arm and rambled at the young girl excitedly as they turned the corner. Along the flowered path across the road, two Rics sandwiched a frilly-dressed Morty between them, each holding one of her hands as she swung her arms merrily. One very fashionable pair nearly collided headlong with Morty as they ate up the sidewalk – both in heels and staring fixedly at their phones, their arms linked at the elbows.

Rick was prodded along sharply when his feet faltered.

Morty had stilled as well, frozen in place as the bustle of Rics and Morties swept past them. She glanced over her shoulder, her wide eyes catching his, and she looked so small – so alone – even surrounded by doppelgangers. Her expression slugged him in the stomach, a hopeless yearning tearing up her eyes, some huge awful question written across her face that Rick didn’t know how to answer.

One Morty lost her footing and stumbled into the guard on Rick’s right. She caught herself before her knees hit the ground and she chuckled nervously turning to apologize but freezing mid stutter when she caught sight of Rick. She openly ogled him and he returned the favor – she was nearly identical to his Morty, was even dressed in a pleated skirt not too different from the one Morty had in her laundry – but a Ric in a smartly tailored suit caught her up by the arm, scowling at him while she hurried the Morty away.

When Rick glanced back up to his Morty, she had turned away, her shoulders bunched and tight even after the social worker Ric wrapped an arm around her.

“This is a place for us,” Ric proclaimed, leading the stiff girl to a black, unmarked hover car. “No bullshit, no testosterone, just us.”

“Eh-hem lesbian,” Rick fake coughed but Ric didn’t bother responding. God, Rics were so much harder to rile up. It frustrated him more than he wanted it to. Ric opened the passenger side door for Morty while one of the guards pulled the back open for Rick and shoved his head down as he bent to fit through. She followed him in, the other guard going around to the other side and slotting in beside him, trapping him in the middle seat.

Morty breathed out a small shuddering breath like she was trying not cry before Ric slid into the driver’s seat and revved the engine. “Pretty neat, huh?” the old woman asked, running a hand over Morty’s messy bed-head like she was stroking a cat.
Morty cleared her throat and heavily swallowed, the sound catching in Rick’s ears. “How did you – how did this place happen?” Morty asked while Rick felt along the hem of his lab coat for the nanobot lock-pick he’d hidden there after coming home from the Citadel, shifting his weight on the pretense of passing a noisy fart. To his disappointment, the women on either side of him seemed undisturbed and unimpressed, but at least he caught Ric rolling her eyes in the rear-view mirror.

“Much like with Ricks and the Citadel, shortly after discovering portal technology, we made a lot of enemies. While our male-counterparts banded together like monkeys to make their flawed metropolis, Rics struggled to exist on our own, so few and far between as we were.” Ric’s fingers found the small tear he’d tucked the small capsule in but the bots were missing. Fucking Ric.

Morty scrunched her face up and asked, “Why not just – I dunno, join up with the Ricks.”

Ric shot Morty a flat glare. “Those idiots? No thanks. Ricks are selfish, uncaring assholes. I’m not gonna pretend that we’re a whole lot better but statistically we’re a lot less sociopathic.” She spun the wheel and then rolled her head on her shoulder. “Well technically we’re still sociopaths but we display sociopathy in a different way. Point is we just get along better with each other than we do with them.”

“But if you’re all Ricks, how - how does that work?”

“What a good fucking question Morty,” Rick griped from the back seat. “Now why don’t you ask her to take off her pants and rub one out?”

Morty blushed and bit down hard on her bottom lip, her profile barely visible before she turned to stare at her lap, her hands still cradling the portal gun.

Ric cut him a haughty look in the rear-view mirror and leaned over, her torso entirely blocking his view of Morty. Her voice was unreasonably patient when she started explaining, “Psychology isn’t really my science of choice but if I had to guess…?” She glared at Rick from the corner of her eye before she continued, “Small genetic differences. Gendered flaws in society. Toxic masculinity. The difference between being raised as a son seventy years ago versus being raised as a daughter. Could be any of those things or all of them combined. Whatever the case, there’s a lot less assorted misogyny when you build an all-woman society. So we improved on their idea and built someplace where we could work together.” Ric concluded her story with a head tilt in Morty’s direction and Rick was furious he had no way to gauge the girl’s reaction.

“What, were you hoping for applause?” Rick bit out between his teeth.

“Oh-kay…” Morty’s wavering voice intoned. “That’s cool and all but what - why did you bring me here?”

Ric smoothly turned the car onto a street of huge, imposing buildings. “Because I think you should live here too.” Rick hated the little hitched breath that got caught in Morty’s throat and he jerked hard at his cuffs, the two guards pulling him back by the elbows.

“No fucking way is she staying here with you,” Rick vowed as the hover car pulled to a stop.

Besides them was a glittering white building that didn’t look entirely dissimilar from council building in the Citadel, whatever the fuck Ric had the nerve to ramble on about their gender differences. The guards unfolded themselves from the car and pulled Rick out by his bicep. Morty blinked at him in the artificial daylight, some long-ingrained instinct urging her to fall beside him with the portal gun held in front of her, angling towards him. If he could just turn... The guards clenched down on his arms and Ric beat him to it, her hand pressing the gun back towards Morty’s stomach and dragging
the girl a few steps away from Rick.

“I told you to hold onto that as a sign of good will,” she gently admonished and Morty blushed.

“Right, so – sorry,” Morty muttered, curling in on herself.

“Hey, no biggie,” Ric frowned, pulling the younger girl back under her arm. “That sad little pout makes me want to spoil you,” she said and Rick just about lost his mind. Who the fuck just says garbage like that out loud? And so openly? And why was Morty blushing, her eyes peering up through her lashes while she cradled Rick’s portal gun against her breast?

A guard prodded him in the back and he was shepherded forward, this time leading the procession – an upsetting change that took Morty out of his clear range of vision and set the rabid animal inside him pacing. Their footsteps echoed on the silver floors and passing Morties stopped to stare as Rick was paraded past them, their curious, open expressions exactly the one Morty wore when he grabbed her by the arm and promised her an adventure. It was eerie to see so many versions of her in one place after spending so long being sure that he would never lay eyes on another one. He caught one small glimpse of his Morty’s face as he was marched around a corner and she looked equally unnerved, her face pale and her eyes blankly gazing through the middle distance while Ric guided her with a reassuring arm.

Yeah, now Morty was figuring out their little field trip might not have been the best idea – now that they were in over their heads and drowning in Rics and Morties. Of fucking course. She couldn’t have possibly wised up about that before she let this strange Ric sweet-talk her into her space ship. Now they were on the ass-end of the multiverse and Rick was once again being thrown under the fucking bus.

The winding hallways and interested glances inevitably ended at an ornate door, a fancy scripted R interlocking with an M over a circle engraved to look like the sun. Ugh, even their logo was lame and co-dependent. Rick wasn’t one to tout the virtues of the Citadel but at least Ricks didn’t share their glory with Morties.

The doors swung open as the entourage approached and Rick wasn’t surprised at all by the group gathered on the other side of the door.

Seven Rics and three Morties sat at a round table like they were Arthurian fucking knights, one chairless gap left at the table where Ric and Morty approached side by side. The well-dressed Council members swiveled their heads as the group entered, their discussion cut short, ten sets of eyes raking over Morty as she was pushed forward, her feet tentatively guiding her to close the circle of women gathered around the table. She fidgeted under their stares and Rick felt his hackles rise where he was held in place a good ten feet back and away from the conclave.

The Ric with the most impressive hair - a large bun that sat atop her head with distinct authority - addressed the social worker Ric still holding Morty to her side. “This is the Morty you rescued?” she asked, her voice the same deep female scratch.

“Rescued is a bit of a stretch,” Rick interjected haughtily, rolling his eyes, and the all-female Council turned to him, apparently noticing him for the first time, their unibrows tilting down in distaste while the Morties quirked surprised looks amongst themselves. “There wasn’t much to ‘rescue’ her from except a loving home.”

“Why is he here?” another Council member spoke up, a massive gold necklace circling her neck under a sheet of straight blue/grey hair.
Ric rubbed her hand up and down Morty’s arm comfortingly. “She insisted,” she explained and Rick felt something behind his navel jerk. Ric was supposed to have taken him without him. He might have come out of that drug trip to find Morty gone and her coordinates such a hot, jumbled mess it would have taken him days to unravel. But Morty hadn’t left him behind. Admittedly she’d let him be fucking handcuffed and dragged around but he supposed it might be minimally better than frantically chasing her across the multiverse.

“I woulda left him, obviously,” Ric continued and Rick zoned back into the events at hand, “but Morty said ‘I won’t go anywhere without this Rick.’” The smarmy woman leaned back far enough to catch him with the corner of her eye when she reiterated, “‘Not my Rick’ . ‘This Rick’. She was very specific.” If Rick could drop the floor out from beneath her feet and send her spiraling into space, he would have. Gladly. And then he’d destroy the time continuum just to watch it happen again.

The strangest thing to Rick was that the Council treated her explanation like it was valid. Like it was normal for a Rick to listen to the random whims of a Morty and change their plans according to a teenager’s irrational preferences. A Ric wearing a flowing white dress nodded and conceded, “Morty’s are pretty clingy.”

The Morties around the tables pouted but didn’t look too hurt by the comment. Then again, the tone of voice had been all wrong sounding to Rick. Soft. Almost happy. And a Ric with wickedly pointed fingernails stretched her arm out to wrap one of the blushing Morties up in her hold, the girl immediately leaning her head against the woman’s breast and letting her card those long nails through her hair while gazing placidly at Rick.

“So a Rick stumbled upon a Morticia,” Bun-Ric droned like she was already a little bored. “Why didn’t you just wipe him and send him on his way?” Wait, wipe? Had that old crone said ‘wipe’? As in ‘memory wipe’? Oh fuck, things had just gotten a lot more serious.

“The things were a little more complicated than usual,” the social worker Ric answered, fishing a small device out of her pocket and chucking it onto the table. The assembled women glanced at it then back to Ric, relatively unimpressed. “The portal detector in U-694 wasn’t working. Faulty actuator. Thing should’ve gone off ages ago. Only reason it did was cause one of his inventions smashed into it.” She pulled her flask from her pocket and took a sip. “This a-auuuh-shole’s been living with the Smiths for over a year.”

“Sh-eeeeeuuh-it,” the Ric in the white dress swore, taking a swig from a fancy chalice. “That changes things.”

“N-ooough-o shit,” the social worker Ric burped, confidently.

“And why didn’t we take this Morty in infancy?” Necklace-Ric demanded, glancing around at the various agreeing faces around the room.

Ric pulled her tablet out from underneath her lab coat with a sigh. “U-694’s Beth was displaying enough at-risk behavior to make the acquisition unwise,” Ric read flatly from her file. “When we first detected Morty’s presence in U-694, Beth and Jerry had just entered a separation. Jerry took Summer with him. Beth went on a bender – her file reports indications of above-the-norm alcoholic tendencies. She botched an important horse surgery nearly losing her job and she was well into her second trimester before she figured out she was pregnant. She had been binge drinking up to that point.” She tilted her head down and said as an aside, “(Yeeks, sorry Morty).”

“Aww jeez,” Morty mumbled to herself while Rick quietly mulled the new information over.
Ric continued, “Once she realized she was pregnant she got her act together but her previously erratic behavior was enough to convince Ric BR Eight-Eight-One that the Changeling Initiative might lead Beth into a downward spiral and since U-694’s Rick was already dead,” a breath left Morty like she’d been punched in the gut and her small hand shot out to brace against the table, “she figured it would be safe enough to leave them be. She set up the moscovium shield and the portal detector and left Beth to her own devices.” The gathered Rics exchanged wary looks.

Morty looked unsteady on her feet and Rick deeply resented the stabilizing hand Ric laid on the small of her back, showering her with open concern. “You okay, bud?” she asked and Rick had a sudden, vivid hallucination of what she’d look like if he set her on fire. Morty was his. And that was what he called her, the magic word that dilated Morty’s pupils like a shot of heroin. As it was, his hands were literally tied and the two guards must have sensed his rising aggression because they clasped his elbows tighter.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me,” Rick demanded, his voice echoing in the gilded room.

“And where did this jag come from again?” a heavily tattooed Ric asked. “What dimension?”

“Tau Three-One-Four,” Ric answered with a shrug, hugging Morty against her side and stroking her hair. Rick could see Morty’s hands shaking where she still held his portal gun carefully at her side.

“You assholes masterminded the Morticia infant fatalities?” Rick asked, jerking against the guards hold.

Bun-Ric looked completely nonplussed when she answered, “Uh, yeah. Glad we didn’t lose your attention to an ill-timed boner.” The Rics chuckled at her joke.

Rick was boiling with rage. “You just collected them all? You pulled them away from their homes and their families and their Ricks just so you could start a little lesbian cult?” Though the rage had less to do with other lonely Ricks than it had to do with the small circles Ric was drawing on the nape of Morty’s neck.

“We took them to protect them,” Necklace-Ric stated, seating herself calmly and sipping from a flask.

“Protect them from what?” Rick demanded, trying to shake of the restrictive hands of the guards.

“From Ricks like you,” Bun-Ric boomed, her voice echoing in the chamber. She swept her eyes over him from top to toe and Rick rankled, but the depth in those icy blue eyes, the perceptive glare, told Rick there was no one he could fool here. “We know the seedy shit you dip-shits get up to,” she continued, the hard stares from seven Rics holding him in place like a tether. “We’ve seen the auctions and the strip clubs and the fucked up websites. We chose to save the Morties we could.”

“How convenient that it’s only the girl-Morties,” Rick snapped. “Now who’s fucking sexist.”

Tattoo-Ric rolled her eyes. “Oh, for once you’re on the wrong side of sexism? Suck it up asshole. Really breathe it in.”

“Ricks are ca-aauuuuuuh-reless with their Morties,” the Ric in the white gown shrugged. “They take the ‘human shield’ idea a little too literally.”

“Here we treat our Morties with respect.” Bun-Ric emphasized her point by laying a hand over the nearest Morty’s shoulder who leaned into the touch.

“No,” Rick frowned, glaring between the three Morties around the table. They were all impeccably
dressed, their hair set perfectly in place. The one next to Necklace-Ric had a matching set of silver jewelry, coils of bracelets covering the entirety of her forearms. “You treat them like pets,” Rick insisted, pointedly letting his gaze rest on the hand still stroking Morty’s untidy hair. “Morty, what are you fucking around for, let’s get out of here already.”

Morty tensed under the social worker Ric’s hand but she pointedly didn’t turn around. Bun-Ric quirked half her eyebrow mockingly and Rick was ready to raze the whole space station to ashes.

“Why do we even bother?” Gown-Ric mumbled, shaking her head and lifting her chalice to her lips. Bun-Ric settled her eyes on Morty and the look was authoritative but kind. “Morty, listen: we didn’t bring you here to explain ourselves to an imposter Rick. We brought you here so you’d have a choice.”

Rick couldn’t see her face but he could picture Morty’s frown. “Uh – what?”


“Not to rub ourselves off but it’s pretty nice,” the Necklace-Morty asserted.

“And we have a strict no-jerks policy,” Tattoo-Ric snarked, cutting Rick a hard glare.

The social worker Ric turned to Morty and knelt down to be at her level, boxing Morty in with her hands on her shoulders. “The Palisade could be your home, Morty. Just like it is to thousands of Rics and hundreds of Morties.” Rick despised her. “You’re still rare here, Morty. Rics outnumber Morties fifty to one – you’d be free to pick your own partner in crime – hell you could rotate every day of the week. You’d be taken care of and loved.”

Oh fuck.

“I - I get to decide?” Morty asked, disbelief resplendent in her tone and Rick didn’t miss the dark looks the Rics bounced around the table until all sets of eyes were turned towards him. “It’s my choice? Jeez this place really is different…” she muttered under her breath.

“All the more reason to stay,” Ric urged, her face a little too sincere for Rick to stomach.

Morty shifted her weight and Rick would have sworn off K-lax for the rest of his life if it meant he could see what expression she wore. “What about-”

“We’d take care of everything Morty,” Bun-Ric assured her.

“Mom and Summer?”

Necklace Ric shrugged. “We could work something out.”

“I - I’m not… smart,” Morty admitted and Rick practically rolled his eyes. Yeah, no shit Morty, no Morty was.

The tattooed Rick chuckled. “Why the fuck would we care? We’re smart enough on our own.”

Morty carefully didn’t turn to look at him when she quietly asked, “What about Rick?”

Bun-Ric smiled and Rick didn’t like the look of it. “We could make him forget you Morty. He’d never interfere with you or your family again.” If Rick felt furious and vaguely nauseous at the threat, he was mollified to see Morty wobble on her feet and clutch the portal gun to her chest with two hands. She was almost in tears, he could tell by the trembling of her hands, the small puffs of
breath audibly escaping her lips, and the concerned looks the Ric’s around the table suddenly adopted.

“For – forget…?” she stammered and Rick could hear the tears in her thick voice. “I – I don’t want-”

“Why don’t you think on it, Morty,” the social worker Ric quickly interjected, her tone jovial and light. “Spend the night here, get a taste of what it’s like. Decide in the morning.”

“I don’t…” Morty lifted one hand to swipe at her tears and Rick growled when Ric used the sleeve of her lab coat to clean up Morty’s face.

“Come on Morty,” Ric continued cheerily. “I’ll take you around town, show you the sights, it’ll be fun.” Morty’s head jerked in his direction but Ric caught her cheek with her palm and ran a thumb over a trail of tears. “He’ll be fine,” Ric answered the question Morty hadn’t voiced. “We’ll put him in a holding cell overnight, no big deal. Ricks are used to those.”

“The fucking hell you will,” Rick growled, vainly trying to shake the guards off his arms for what felt like the hundredth time.

“Rest, Morty. Take your time to think. We won’t take any action without your consent,” Bun-Ric said magnanimously. “We’ll talk again in the morning.”

Chapter End Notes

Looks like Morty has some thinking to do...
Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Notes

Wow, the feedback for that last chapter was nuts! Thanks for all the comments!

Now, it's time for Rick to do some thinking...

“Come on Morty, we’ll let the guards take him from here,” Ric asserted once the ornate doors slammed closed behind the mismatched entourage. She grabbed up Morty’s hand and spun her, the disoriented girl going wobbly in the knees as she twirled.

The guards tightened their grips on Rick’s arms and started dragging him down a side hallway, the path leading away from where Ric was guiding Morty. “Hey!” he shouted as he dug his heels in and tried to find the leverage to aim a kick at the woman on his left when Morty noticed the commotion and turned around.

Her face was pale, her eyes deep set in shadow, and even when she raked her gaze over him, it was oddly empty, like she was looking at a stranger.

“W – wait!” she pleaded, scurrying back to him and reaching for his lab coat with her free hand before she froze, her fingers less than three inches from his chest. That little gap stung like a zap from a live wire, especially as he watched her fingers curl slowly away from him before she dropped her hand. She was holding the portal gun at her side and it was so close he could practically taste the film of molecules that would take them out of this fucking place but the guards tugged him away before it swung into his range.

“Morty, come on,” Rick urged, struggling against the tug of the guards to lower his face closer to her level. She was dodging his eye contact so he snapped, “Look at me!” with a tone that brokered no argument and made the guards exchange a look and tighten their hold on his arms. But it had the desired effect on Morty. She flinched and stilled, her eyes darting up to his and he found what he’d been looking for, what he’d been hoping for; that dependent glimmer still flickering in the depths of her pupils, dimmed but not completely dried up. “What are you waiting for, Morty?” he urged, a bite to his voice as she shifted her weight ever so slightly in his direction, her body programed to obey.

“Woah there Morty,” Ric hurried back up the hall. “You gotta stay away from him with that,” Ric admonished, pulling Morty against her stomach and dragging the portal gun hopelessly out of Rick’s reach.

“Get your fucking hands off her,” Rick finally snapped, the demand doing nothing to satiate the raging burn of anger heaving around in his stomach. Especially not when Ric smirked, her hand lifting from Morty’s shoulder to play with her hair.

“Or what?” she challenged, that infuriating Cheshire grin quirking up her lips.

“I’m going to make you eat your ovaries,” he promised and she barked out a laugh.

“I’d love to see you try.”

Morty stepped out of Ric’s hold but it was a lateral move; a side-step away from both of them while
her fidgety hand smoothed the hair Ric had been toying with. “I – I want to see where they’re taking him,” she said quakily to the carpet but her renewed interest in him bolstered Rick’s confidence.

Ric’s face pinched down in a familiar frown. “Morty, he’ll be fine. Scout’s honor.” Rick absolutely hated her for holding three fingers up and quirking a conspiratorial smile at the young girl.

Morty’s brow screwed up in a scowl but she repeated her request, a new resolve tickling the edges of her voice. “I want to see where you’re putting him.”

Rick didn’t miss the accusatory switch Morty made from ‘they’ to ‘you’ and he didn’t think his female doppelganger had either with the way the corners of her eyes tightened. But she shrugged, carefully nonchalant, and took a sip from her flask. “Okay, Morty. You run the show.” Rick watched the way those words stole the breath from Morty’s lungs before he was turned away from her and marched down a series of winding halls. He craned his head over his shoulder to catch the morose, uninterested way Morty stared at her feet while Ric wrapped her arm around the girl’s shoulders and rambled animatedly to the dour procession.

When the gilded hallway turned into a sterile, tiled alcove, he figured they were just about there.

They passed through a locked door and the room on the other side was filled with blinking machinery and computer screens but Rick wasn’t able to make out much of their purpose before his Ric-Guard unlocked a second door and the cell came into sight.

“We don’t get much use out of this place,” Ric said airily, pushing the heavy door open and gesturing grandly to his new accommodations. “We don’t have quite the same problem with crime as the Citadel does but everything should be working.” Her eyes darted along the walls and ceiling before she shrugged and nodded to herself.

“La di da,” Rick couldn’t resist mocking as he was shoved into the sterile room split in half by a row of thick, metal bars. As far as prisons went, Rick had been in worse. A lot worse. It was clean and dry and noticeably devoid of body fluids. The cell contained a toilet and a hard shelf, some approximation of a cot, built of the same heavy stone as the walls. On the other side of the bars, there was an empty desk covered in enough dust to tell Rick the lady hadn’t been lying about how often they needed the cell.

One of the guards pinched his elbows together behind his back, shuffling him through the gap in the bars and slamming the gate closed behind him. The bolt caught with an audible clunk and Rick breathed out a hot plume of breath from his nose while he glared at the solid slab of stone making up the back wall of his prison.

He schooled his features into something closer to neutral before he quirked a brow over his shoulder. “What, you gonna leave me in these?” he asked, shaking his cuffed hands in their direction. The guards shot a look at Ric who shrugged and leaned against the barren desk. Rick did his best to ignore the slow scrutiny with which Morty was surveying the small jail – or more pointedly the glimmer of relief that burned in her eyes as she studied his new cage.

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One of the white-uniformed guards stepped up to the bars. “Turn around,” she demanded and Rick obeyed with an eye roll, anxious to get the manacles off. The guard unlocked his cuffs and pulled them back through the bars with more agility than Rick had expected. He disguised the small jerk he’d done in her direction (a failed attempt to grab her arm before she’d pulled away) as an arm stretch, rotating his shoulder in its socket until it cracked.

“Satisfied now, Morty?” he goaded, prowling closer to the bars and wrapping his fingers around the metal. They were solid, heavy, and cold to the touch. His bare hands – mechanically augmented
though they might be – weren’t strong enough to bend solid steel. Anger rankled around in his stomach like a loose bolt as he leaned down low enough to force Morty to meet his eyes. “Happy now you’ve seen your grandpa behind bars.”

“You aren’t my grandpa,” she whispered and even though he caught Ric quirking her unibrow in delight over Morty’s shoulder, Rick knew the tone too well to think he’d lost.

“Come a little closer, Morty.”

“You’d better not,” Ric warned.

He dropped his voice conspiratorially. “Send your new friends away, Morty.”

She bit her lip and her eyes burned like coals when she breathed, “Can we – can I get a moment with him? Alone?” She could never really resist his commands.

Her request was met with stark silence.

Morty exhaled a shaky sigh and her eyes tracked the tongue Rick dragged over his upper teeth. “You told me – you said I ‘run the show’, Ric,” she reminded, her voice flat and low.

Ric tilted her head and something shrewd passed behind her eyes. “You heard the lady; get out,” she nodded her head to the two guards who strode out of the room, closing the door behind them. “I’m staying right here, Morty.” She raised half her unibrow at Rick in challenge. “And I think you oughta leave the portal gun with me too. Go ahead, put it right there on the desk.” Morty shuffled back to the desk and set it down with a trembling hand. Ric watched the movement with cat-slit eyes. “Cute nail polish,” she admired absently, catching Morty’s fingers with her own. Rick’s hand instinctively jerked towards the pocket where he usually kept a weapon. “My favorite color,” Ric added but her smile cut short when Morty yanked away like she’d been stung. Rick glared at his doppelganger as she visibly turned that interaction over in her head like a puzzle box.

Then Morty was facing him again and her soft blush and searing eyes were just for Rick – exactly how he preferred. She shifted closer to the bars slowly until she was close enough that he could reach out and touch her. It felt like eons since her wrist had been carefully wrapped up in his grasp and he let his hand slot through the bars and brush along her cheek, his thumb tracing the line of her jaw.

Ric’s steady eyes were watching them like a hawk but she was behind Morty, the curtain of brown hair shielding his hand from her view. And if she thought her presence was going to intimidate him she was out of her fucking mind. His calloused hand dragged lower until it circled Morty’s thin neck like a loose collar. Her pupils expanded like exploding stars.

“You aren’t really thinking of staying, are you Morty?” he whispered, deadly flat.

Morty’s chest rose and fell with her quick breaths as he reeled her closer with the grip around her neck. “They – they said it was my decision,” she stammered softly once she was close enough that her chest brushed against the bars on her inhales.

“Morty, don’t fucking lie to yourself,” Rick demanded, pressing gently against her pulsepoint with his thumb. “You don’t want to make decisions. You want to be told what to do. You want me to tell you what to do.” Her lip wobbled and it looked like she was thinking about arguing so he added, “Remember what happened last time you took charge, Morty? Who had to pay the price for that?” Her mouth dropped open and he watched the memory of the night in his bedroom and Jerry-bots orchestrated appearance play across the back of her teary eyes. She was close enough that the little
hopeless gasp she breathed out fanned his face.

He looped a finger from his freehand into the waistband of her jeans and held her steady when she tried to back away. “And who – Rick - *who the fuck are you*?” Her eyes were empty and wet when she gaped up at him through tear encrusted eyelashes. “Some guy who what – just showed up and – and pretended to be related?”

“Morty, you little idiot, *I am* related,” he growled back.

She laughed a sad, short, panicked sound. “Sure. Just as much as that other Morty’s Rick that – that showed up. The one you killed.” Ric’s head cocked at that nugget of information. “Or that cop you shot. Or her.” Morty jerked he head back towards Ric who shot him an infuriatingly cocky wink. “You’re just the - What makes you any different from that rich Rick at the Citadel. You even get off on the same stuff.”

“Morty,” he bit out warningly between his teeth. He knew his face was doing something that scared her when she tried to pull away but he tightened the fingers around her throat.

That nebula of pain was back in her eyes, that swirling spark of *something* circling the event horizon of the black hole he’d opened up inside her. That’s what he was, after all. A big black hole. Her eyes watered up when she admitted quietly, “You – you were always telling me–” She glared up at the ceiling and tears started to fall in earnest as she continued, “-that’s what you always said. That you were *my* Rick.” Her breathing was coming fast and hard, borderline hyperventilating, and Rick relaxed his fingers, curving his hand until it was buried in the hair at the back of her neck, massaging soothing circles into the base of her skull.

“You are *my* Morty,” Rick insisted, thumbing away her tears with his other hand and cradling her face against his palm.

She leaned into the touch almost instinctively before she blinked her submission away, shuttering herself behind startlingly blank features. “I - I’m not,” she said definitively and a tidal wave of anger swept through Rick like a biblical storm. “I’ve gotta – I need to think about this.”

“You can’t be serious, Morty,” he growled raggedly, his voice gravel while his hand fisted in her hair. “You’re just like me Morty,” he didn’t miss the way she tensed at the words, her teeth worrying at her bottom lip. “You’ll miss the danger, Morty. The adrenaline. You get off on it, Morty, just like me.”

“They don’t *know* you Morty,” he vowed as she jerked away from him, snagging her own hair in her determination to get out of his hold. “Not like I do.”
She stepped out of reach of his grasping hand and struggled to catch her breath but her eyes were still laser-beam locked on Rick when she mostly whispered, “I think I want to leave…”

He wrapped his fingers around the bars, tracking her retreating form with the intent of making her pay for every inch of separation. “Remember that, Morty.” He pressed his forehead to the bars and leered at her through the gaps. “You think they’ll know what to do with a little pervert like you?”

Ric unraveled her legs from the desk and sprang to her feet. “Okay, that’s enough of that,” she sing-songed, clapping her hands over Morty’s shoulders and turning her bodily away from Rick. “Morty, go on ahead. And take the portal gun with you,” she nudged Morty towards the desk until the rigid girl stretched out a hand and snatched away his last bid for freedom. Rick grit his teeth but bit down on the growl. “I’ll be right there,” Ric promised, waiting for the door to swing closed behind Morty before she turned an amused glare on Rick.

“What?” he demanded indifferently, running his hand through his hair and stretching his arms above his head.

“I remembered why I’ve heard of you,” Ric announced to the new and heavy silence.

“You want a medal?” Rick asked flatly.

“You’re the Jerry-killer.” Rick looked at her blandly but his apathy didn’t stop the small smile from wrinkling the corners of her eyes. Rick blinked at her, trying to convey how deeply he couldn’t possibly care less about her getting to the point except that it might shut her up. “And you know I couldn’t help but notice U-694’s Jerry wasn’t in the picture when I showed up.” Ric was pacing along the other side of the bars cheerily and it was really heating the angry wire coiled tightly in Rick’s guts. “So my question for you is did Jerry leave the picture before or after you showed up?” Rick pointedly didn’t answer, glaring at her below a flat eyebrow. “Because you know, Morties are tough – tougher than you seem to realize – and if she found out you killed him…” His cheekbone twitched and Ric grinned like an overfed cat.

“Snazzy place you got here,” he shrugged, glancing around like he was standing in a throne room instead of a cell.

“You’ll be cozy enough,” Ric shrugged. “And don’t worry, no one will bother you. I’ll make sure of it.”

Rick glared at her pointedly. “Yeah, too late for that.”

Ric continued on unfazed, “What’s especially funny to me is that you seem to think you’re some unique little butterfly,” she taunted while Rick settled himself onto the dusty concrete slab, laying back and lacing his fingers behind his head. “Do you think you’re the only Rick who plays these little games with their Morty?” When he didn’t answer she scoffed, the noise harsh and familiar to Rick’s ears. “You idiots with your emotional hang-ups and complexes - you tend to get your wires crossed between love and lust, and not in the usual way.”

Rick kept his face as passive as he could manage while he glared at the ceiling. “Blow me.”

“And if you think she couldn’t find that sort of…” even from the corner of his eye, Rick could see the joy radiating off her like a tangible aura. “…physical fulfillment here,” his unibrow twitched unintentionally and he could hear the laughter in her voice when she continued, “well, in some ways you’d be right. I imagine a Ric could do a much better job. Hands on experience with the equipment and whatnot.” She wiggled her fingers at him tauntingly.
“Don’t. Touch. Her.” Rick growled, baring his teeth to the cement ceiling.

“Oh, I wouldn’t without her consent obviously,” Ric continued, her tone cutting as she sauntered away from the cell. “But as I’m sure you know; Ricks can be very persuasive,” she tossed over her shoulder before the door slammed closed with a loud metallic thud behind her.

Rick counted to ten slowly in his head, a deep breath stretching his lungs uncomfortably before he exhaled. What a massive bitch.

When he was sure a stream of swears wouldn’t pour out of his mouth unbidden, he scoured the cell from his prone position, his eyes raking over every crack, every crevice, every bar.

There were two surveillance cameras in the room, both located on the opposite wall, way too far out of reach. They were attached solidly, thick screws embedding them into solid stone, so they weren’t going anywhere without more tools than Rick had at his disposal.

He used his cybernetic eye to scan for anything he might have missed but the room was water tight, not so much as a grate or a tile to break up the stretch of smooth rock and deeply inlaid metal. It was designed to hold a Rick of one sort or another, and these women apparently did nothing by halves.

He hummed to himself, hoping the tune sounded light and unconcerned to anyone who might be listening. If anyone was listening. Almost certainly he was being observed; those computer consoles in the other room being put to use. It was pretty obvious Ricks – the kinds with big old shlongs dangling between their legs – weren’t a common occurrence on this glorified Citadel wanna-be. And if he was being observed, he didn’t want to give them the satisfaction of pacing against the bars like a caged animal, even if that’s what it felt like his psyche was doing behind his skull.

He was so fucking sick of being locked up in cells. He was sick of wearing cuffs. He was sick of being dragged around by armed guards and getting his fucking free will taken away from him on a whim. It had looked to be about afternoon when last he’d seen the artificial light out on the street so if things went according to the Rics’ plan, he was looking at a fifteen to sixteen hour stint before Morty supplied her verdict and he could portal off this garbage dump a free man. Assuming her ‘decision’ was the right and obvious choice. Otherwise he’d be portaling off this garbage dump a free and ignorant man.

But there was no way Morty would choose to stay here with them. No fucking way.

Morty’s coordinates blipped to a different set of gibberish symbols. No doubt Ric had portaled her somewhere to kick off the full tour of the Eve-only Garden of Eden, and Rick clenched his teeth until his jaw started to ache. He couldn’t even read all the numerals in their dimensional readouts but he resented every one of them that didn’t match.

Morty was… something resembling happy with him. More important than that: she was dependent on him. She couldn’t go back to a normal Rick-less life, not now that she knew what the multiverse had to offer a couple of people with almost nothing to lose.

But that was kind of the problem. Staying here she’d be surrounded by hims and these versions would dote on her in the exact sickening way that really got her hot. All that petting, all those PDAs, all those guileless smiles – those were exactly the things he doled out to her in small enough doses to keep her pining without letting her get complacent with his affection. This place was a fucking treasure trove of positive reinforcement and at that very moment Morty was probably somewhere being fussed over and dolled up and coddled in all the ways Rick so carefully reserved.

But he also knew her well enough to know she liked the challenge of pleasing him. And apparently
sometimes she liked the repercussions of displeasing him which suited him fucking perfectly. So maybe she was warped enough to be as off-put by their sensitivity as he was.

Except even if she wasn’t interested in the Rics per se, she might take them up on their offer just to ditch him.

Rick concentrated on keeping his breaths long and easy while he thought back to the moment Morty found out he wasn’t from her dimension. She was pretty wrecked over the fact that she wasn’t technically his Morty. Because of course she would be; that was the sort of sentimental bullshit that she thrived on. And if some female-Ric hadn’t descended from the sky like an extinction-level event Morty would still be none the wiser and he’d be celebrating his newly earned seat at the head of the Smith family table by getting drunk in his garage.

God-fucking-damnit.

Okay, thinking about things logically, he might not be able to count on Morty to make the right decision. The only person besides himself that she had ever expressed an interest in had a noticeable pair of decent tits so maybe women were her preference. He’d figured she was like him — into anything and everything that could get him off — but maybe he’d been projecting. Moral of the story was he couldn’t quite depend on Morty to pick him over a space station full of more empathetic, openly doting versions of himself who had a lifetime’s experience with a vagina. *Fuck.*

If he got wiped - *jeezus*, the thought alone made him clench his teeth so hard his jaw ached - they could make him forget about Morty just like he’d skimmed the memories of her from all those Morties. And you couldn’t pick and choose what was lost — it was all or nothing — so erasing Morty would mean erasing *all* the time since he’d met her in the Smith house on U-694.

That added up to more than a year of his life. If he woke up on some random planet with no memories of her, if he blinked and suddenly she was gone…

A year and a half ago, he’d been a very different man. Back then, every close call was a missed opportunity. If he laid down to rest in something that wasn’t a complete blackout, he’d spend hours debating the merits of waking up at all. In all the multiverse, there wasn’t a single face he looked forward to seeing, no real pleasure besides what was chemically induced, and there was nothing so valuable it couldn’t be sacrificed on a whim.

Some of that had changed since he’d moved into the Smith house. It wasn’t like he was *happy* or healthy or fucking whatever dime-store psychobabble a therapist would call being a dull piece of shit. But he was less angry all the time. There were fewer nights he half-invented something to kill himself before he passed out in the middle of the task. He spent a lot less time brewing over the uselessness of existence and what a waste it was to be born a genius but be trapped in an endless cycle of futility that spun on for eternity until everything evaporated into the void.

If Morty stayed on the Palisade, if they wiped the last year and a half from his memories, he’d be right back to where he was back then; *who* he was back then. The hole that had been slowly filling up would be empty again; just one big bottomless pit that wanted to suck him down and suffocate him in the dark. Going back to that might *literally* kill him.

That couldn’t happen. He *couldn’t* let that happen. And he was a genius and a god. So if he set his mind to something, consider it fucking done.

Rick lifted his head off his arms and jerked his sleeve up to check his watch, realizing belatedly that he didn’t feel the familiar weight of it around his wrist. Of course they took it. He could do *a lot* with the thing but right then he was most concerned with the time. He hadn’t been there terribly long -
long enough that a good portion of his body heat had been leeched into the stone and one of his legs had fallen asleep, but it couldn’t have been more than an hour or two. Probably less.

*Fuck.*

If someone would just come in and check on him, that would be ideal. If they got close enough to the bars, he could steal their keys or use them as a hostage and negotiate his freedom. If he could break out he wouldn’t need to worry about being wiped so it was really the best case scenario. But if the Ric-bitches of the Palisade thought anything like he did, they would know to keep him isolated. They probably wouldn’t buy any performances of distress. He couldn’t just fake a fucking heart attack; they were probably monitoring his health via all that equipment in the other room right now. Ricks had the same technology – hell Rick had a system of his own built into the bunker because what good was a dead interrogate-e – so even the performance of a lifetime would be useless against that sort of hard and fast science.

Rick bit the inside of his cheek and tried not to pay too much attention to Morty’s dimensional readout as it blipped to another new location, the numbers and symbols almost always changing. Even if Rick had his portal gun, he couldn’t program it to her coordinates. He’d never been this far out in the multiverse before and his tech wasn’t outfitted with half the alien digits flashing in the periphery of his vision.

He had to prepare for the worst case scenario. If he got wiped, he had to leave behind a breadcrumb trail for an amnesiac Rick to find his way back. Assuming of course that ‘wipe’ hadn’t been an uninventive euphemism for murder.

Rick growled out a few choice curse words under his breath and refocused.

What did he have to work with? They’d confiscated everything from him besides the clothes on his back and the shit hidden inside his body which admittedly left a lot of tech but how much of that was useful?

He had his cybernetic eye. It remotely uploaded footage every twelve hours when it was within range of connecting to his computer. At the very least, he had a few hours of this place recorded – not to mention some of his favorite uploads that he kept in its storage for easy, remote perusal. A good portion of them included Morty. So if they wiped him and he woke up groggy and confused in some ditch, he’d eventually access the recent memory stream and *bam*, there’s Morty. Year-and-a-half-ago Rick would mark her as he had the first night he’d met her – as a precious resource, a rare and valuable female-Morty - and he’d be tempted by the payout enough to hunt her down. And if she’d convinced him not to sell her in one evening, she could probably do it again. Maybe. Assuming he gave her a chance to open her mouth and be charming or pathetic or whatever the fuck had compelled him to keep her around for company in the first place.

Then again, cybernetic eyes weren’t exactly uncommon among Ricks. A lot of Ricks had lost an eye fairly early on in their dimension hopping careers; most to the same Haumea fungus in a culture gathering gone wrong. They diversified somewhat on how they chose to replace their eye – some opted for an organic cloned replacement, some for alien transplants, some for cybernetics (and a very specific, small group of Ricks illogically chose to wear an eyepatch, presumably for the aesthetic alone) – but there were enough Ricks with a missing eye that it was fairly common knowledge.

Rick had no idea whether Rics had the same bad luck with their own eyeballs but he didn’t doubt they were smart enough to think to scan him for robotics. And accessing and wiping his internal memory card would be easy for a pack of Rics. So there went that idea.

His nanobots – those were much rarer and wouldn’t be found by any regular scanner. But they
weren’t programeed for file storage. It would be laughably easy to change that, or to at least set them up to zap some kind of message into his brain (the coordinates of the Palisade maybe) – but he had no way to access them. His watch had been oh-so conveniently confiscated after all. And even though the cameras taunting him from the opposite wall likely had enough parts to rig some sort of solution, they were too far away and too well secured to be of any use. So that idea hit a dead end quicker than a Korblockian traffic stop.

Worst of all, these assholes were detail oriented, he could tell. Even if he wrote himself a note somewhere on his body or on his clothes, he knew they’d find it – even if he could be surreptitious enough to not be seen doing it on camera. He was facing off against himself after all. And – he really didn’t like admitting it but - Ric hadn’t been off the mark when she’d rambled on about the gender differences. These women weren’t sloppy in the way he could depend on from the vast majority of Ricks he’d come into contact with. Or at least they were being extra careful around him. It would have been flattering if it weren’t so goddamn aggravating.

He growled out a sigh, re-crossing his ankles and closing his eyes. Stuck on some fem-dom space station was not how he picture the day fleshing out. He was supposed to wake up leisurely, have a little pre-execution pick-me-up, and maybe take a bit of time to taunt Jerry before hurling him into the vacuum of space. But whatever fucking time it was at the moment, he should be drinking himself half to death in victory not locked in a fucking cell.

And because he’d been so sure he had all the time in the world, he hadn’t even finished Jerry off. The idiot was still floating up in space, locked in the hangar of Rick’s downed ship. If Rick didn’t get back to him soon, he’d dehydrate and die. Not quite the end Rick had imagined for him though it was torturous enough to compete. But it was fucking impossible to air the dead-body smell out of a spaceship with all that recycled air.

Rick’s eyes blinked open, staring unseeingly at the solid rock ceiling.

Jerry.

Of fucking course – Jerry.

If Rick woke up on some intermediate planet, no memories of how he got there and nothing on him except his portal gun, the first place he’d go was his downed ship! He knew those coordinates like they were the only lifeline in a storm – he knew them when he was blackout drunk and wacked out on drugs and delirious with blood loss. They could erase a good chunk of his life before they’d be able to scrub that number from his brain.

So if they wiped him, he’d portal to the ship, find Jerry (dead or alive – it wouldn’t make a difference) and even if he’d be confused as fuck over how a random-Jerry got into his secret hideaway, the idiot’s genetics would lead him to U-694. That was a pretty hefty start.

But how would the Rics have dealt with his presence in U-694? They’d been purposely obtuse when Morty had asked after her mother and sister - a classic Rick-trick to avoid saying something that might go over unfavorably - but that could mean literally anything.

They would obviously raid his garage. The bunker wouldn’t be hard to find for them either. They’d take what they liked and would destroy the rest. Ricks were the type that really liked burning bridges, especially each other’s. So he wouldn’t have access to any of the useful tech he kept at the Smith’s, nor his extensive memory logs.

But if he made it to U-694, he’d see some proof of Morty. Some tangible evidence of a female-Morty and he’d be interested. Interested enough to hunt her down if Beth and Summer told him she went
missing.

But staging Morticia deaths seemed to be the Ric’s MO. He’d bet his weight in Shmeckles that social-worker-wanna-be Ric was already orchestrating some car crash or freak explosion to cover the tracks of yet another missing Morty. Though that sort of scheme was a lot easier when there wasn’t a grown, nagging teenager to disagree with the idea of misleading her family. And apparently listening to Morty’s input was something Rics prided themselves on so maybe her feelings would be taken into account.

Thing was, with Jerry-bot’s recent performance, Beth and Summer wouldn’t be particularly inclined to let Morty wander off with a strange adult so long as he wasn’t around to sign off on it (even if it was a version of him). Correction: Summer at least stood a chance of putting two and two together. This morning he’d been reluctant to interact with the other Ric so if she showed up without him, what could she possible say? That he died tragically or otherwise disappeared with no warning and - oh yeah - she’s keeping Morty? No, that probably wouldn’t fly.

Getting the family’s ‘consent’ (Rick rolled his eyes at the thought) would be a lot of work and with everyone so on edge, it might never happen. Ric would be out of fucking luck on that front but Ricks were known for their stubbornness so he couldn’t bank on the idea of her turning away at the first refusal. No, she’d figure out a way to keep Morty, just like he would (just like he had) if he were in her position.

And if he wanted Morty and she had more baggage than was easily manageable…

He clenched his teeth and fisted the hair behind his head.

If it was Rick – and it was – he’d wipe Morty.

It was the simplest solution and it tied up every loose end in a neat little leash they could hold in their hands and lead Morty around with. She’d never miss him, she’d never miss her family, she’d never ask any awkward questions. It was the closest thing to indoctrinating her as an infant as they could possibly get. A shortcut. And Ricks loved shortcuts.

A muscle in his cheek started to twitch and he was too frustrated to will it to stop.

If they wiped her, there would be no getting her back. Not really. She wouldn’t be his Morty – the one who’d snorted half a bite of burrito out her nose the first time she heard him speaking Karfleblarf; the one who completely accidentally saved his ass from getting disintegrated on the 42nd moon of Jupiter by sneezing at the right time; the one whose eyes turned into glowing black pits when he curled his fingers around hers and held her hand.

For fuck’s sake, if it was him and he wanted Morty as badly as these chicks did, he’d be wiping her right now, whether she had made her decision or not. Hopefully they were showing a little more restraint but Rick had never been much for hope, especially when it came to assuming the best of himself.

Fuck.

He couldn’t be wiped. He had to escape. He had to get out of this cell, find Morty, and then portal off this fucking space station, preferably incinerating it behind them. What they’d do after that he wasn’t so sure but the first step already seemed like enough of a challenge.

Except, well, maybe it wasn’t. He needed something else to work with besides his old fucking body and the useless tech it contained but maybe there was a way to get someone through that door. So
long as Morty still thought she had the right to choose, he was valuable to the Rics. Valuable enough that they’d probably make an effort to keep him alive. Probably. Assuming they hadn’t already given up on waiting for her to dither to some half-assed conclusion and made the choice for her.

But he was still alive and still conscious so they must not have won her over yet.

And if theoretically he was valuable to them, they wouldn’t let him die if something happened to him – some medical emergency for example. They’d have to come in and save his ass because Morty would not shuffle quietly into their open arms if her Rick had died on their watch no matter how much she wanted to play the ‘you’re not my real Rick’ card at the moment.

And if a medical emergency might get someone’s attention…

If the only way to bring someone into this room was an actual, honest crisis, well, it just so happened he had a way to give them that. It was real fucked up and it would almost certainly kill him but he did have a way to draw their attention.

He could stop his heart.
Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Rick breathed a long sigh out through his nose and felt his face wrinkle as he scowled. This was why he hated being locked up: put him somewhere with no distractions but his own mind and things always got a little fucked up.

Stopping his heart was the kind of power move that could only be done once.

He’d be playing the odds (really, truly, awful, terrible odds) that they were monitoring his health and that if they were, that they’d care if he went into cardiac arrest, and that if they cared, they’d be able to respond in time to undo the damage he’d done to himself. That was a lot of ifs.

Rick took another long breath; in through his nose, out through his mouth.

This could kill him. He’d made a bet he wouldn’t die in a cage and he had really wanted to win that one.

For how often he’d considered or attempted offing himself, the reality was he never had the balls to try it sober. And well, Rick was a fucking genius so there was a reason that he wasn’t dead and that reason was because he didn’t want to be, even if he sometimes forgot that fact.

Rick breathed out another long steady breath and watched his chest deflate.

Was this worth the risk? After all, if they wiped him, he’d just go back to the life he’d been living a year and a half ago. Sure, he wasn’t the happiest of men but that’s because he was smart instead and even the semi-crappy existence bouncing between safe holes and federation cops and galactic coups was probably preferable to the inevitable nothingness of death.

But if Rick was willing to risk his life to drink alien liquor that by all means should boil his brain out his ears just to get drunk, then he could risk his life to get back Morty who did, in some ways, make his miserable existence a little less miserable. Most of the time. A lot of the time. Except for when she pulled stupid shit like this, obviously.

Trouble was; he was really bad at pulling the trigger. That last rung of self-preservation was always the hardest to let go of. He’d only gotten close when he was plastered and it had been way too long since his last drink.

Rick blinked sedately at the solid rock ceiling and remembered the way Morty’s disbelieving smile had looked lit by the soft glow of phosphorescent flowers on Cartus Prime. He’d watched the universe expand in her eyes, saw that soft, open wonder transform the shape of her life into something extraordinary before she turned to Rick like he was giving her something incredible. Like he was something special.

It wasn’t even really a choice at all.

Fuck it.

Fuck everything.

He sat up abruptly and clenched his left hand like it had fallen asleep. He’d planted the kill switch
between the first and second knuckle of his ring finger. The whole arm was cybernetic (the reason why it needed to be replaced was part of how he’d gotten the idea to plant a kill switch in the first place - torture really wasn’t pretty) and it was just a matter of finding the right seam with his nail. The whole idea behind the design was he could do it one handed in case he was restrained so he raised his right hand to his chest and started panting, his erratic breathing not so hard to fake given the circumstances.

“Hey!” he shouted, stumbling to his feet and bracing his curled hand against the bars as he bent over and gasped. “Hey assholes! I’ve got a medical emergency!”

No response whatsoever. Not a great sign he ruminated while running his thumb nail along the small seam on his finger. Ric said he’d be left alone but would she leave him alone to die? He peeled the thin layer of synthetic skin back to reveal the metal joint underneath. If they were monitoring him, nothing outside of an elevated breath rate and a surplus of adrenaline would be registering on their censors and Rick was really risking his life on the idea that someone had been left behind to keep an eye on him. Because there was a distinct chance that no one was waiting on the other side of that door. God, what if he was putting on this performance for nothing?

His thumb nail caught on the small peg that would trigger his cybernetic heart to shut down and he dragged in a deep breath.

He bent over and grimaced at his knees. Okay here it was. The moment of truth.

He pushed hard at the little peg but his fingernail chipped and his thumb slid right over it. Fuck. When he’d installed it, he had made the trigger a little sticky; obviously he didn’t want to accidentally stop his heart but come the fuck on.

Jeezus, even with the cybernetic heart, his pulse was racing, almost like the mechanics knew they were about to seize, possibly forever.

“Seriously,” he groaned loudly, massaging his chest, “Something is going on! At least give me some tools - a fucking screwdriver!”

Silence. Goddamnit, he had to try again.

The little peg just needed to slide a few milimeters towards his palm; that was it. Just a tiny fraction of an inch distance between his heart pumping blood through his body and horrific stillness and then maybe death.

His finger couldn’t quite find the right traction and it slid along metal again without the intended disaster.

“My heart, it’s malfunctioning!” he gasped theatrically and bore a hard look right into the security camera. “You gonna let me fucking die here or what?”

No one answered.

His broken nail caught on the edge of the little peg and he swallowed heavily. “Morty you better be fucking worth it,” her muttered and he braced himself for the pain.

The door swung open as the ragged edge of his fingernail caught on the peg and almost nudged it to home base.

Rick froze, eyes bulging, prepared to continue the charade for whatever Ric guards were slinking into the room, immensely euphorically thrilled that he didn’t need to actually put himself into cardiac
arrest. He was so amped up on adrenaline it took him a moment to register who he was looking at.

Short instead of lanky, warm hues of brown and yellow, chocolate eyes a little too wide for her face.

It wasn’t a Ric, it was his Morty.

His brain short circuited and he called out, “Morty!” too excitedly. He threw himself against the bars, his eyes raking over her as she stepped into the room, the door slamming closed behind her.

He’d guessed right when he’d figured the Rics would use their time together to dress her up. She was in an airy yellow blouse cropped a few inches above where her shorts cinched at her natural waist, the cut exposing a stripe of tantalizing pale skin. A topaz gem glittered on a chain around her wrist and her headband had been replaced with a crown of red flowers. Rick hated how much everything suited her. It would have been better if they’d plastered her with enough makeup to look like a child in a beauty pageant or if they made her wobble around on heels. Instead she looked comfortable and stylish and foreign and Rick was struck hard by how much younger - how much more vibrant she was than him.

She was alone, her face somber and serious, her arms tucked behind her back while she bore into his eyes with an intensity that made him suddenly wonder whether he still needed a switch to turn off his heart.

“Are you really having a heart attack?” she asked earnestly, not able to keep the concern from her voice.

“What do you think, Morty,” he answered stiffly, uncomfortably out of his element. He’d been expecting Rics with keys and maybe weapons; not a girl with flowers in her hair.

“I – I think you’re a big faker, old man,” she scolded. Then she smiled, a small self-satisfied quirk to her lips when she lifted a fist, flicking her hand open to show him the cell key looped around her middle finger.

Rick hooted; genuinely, unexpectedly crowing in delight. “Morty you little fucking weasel how did you get that!?” he exclaimed, struggling to lower his voice when the words came out too loud.

“I asked,” she shrugged, cheeks tinging pink as she padded into the room.

“Wait, what?” Rick frowned, following her on the other side of the bars as she wandered to the desk. She was holding something behind her back and he didn’t miss the way she stayed carefully out of his reach. His eyes narrowed into slits, adrenaline kicking back into gear when she leaned against the wood, the pose eerily similar to the one Ric had taken up earlier.

When she revealed the contents of her other hand, her fingers grasped around the neck of a bottle of whiskey – nice whiskey – ice ran through his blood.

“What are you doing with that, Morty?” Rick growled, his fists clenching the bars between them like he could wring the truth from the metal itself. She held out the bottle towards him, the butt of it within his reach if he extended his arm through the bars. He watched it wobble as her hand trembled.

“I want to talk,” Morty stated and Rick’s breathing steadied out into the deep, even huffs of a predator.

“What’s the whiskey for?” he asked, and he had to press his chest all the way to the bars to snatch it out of her hand. He didn’t miss the way her fingers released the neck of the bottle and jerked back to her side like she was feeding an animal with lots of teeth.
“Drinking,” she seemed confused by the question but there was something cagey in her normally naïve eyes. “You don’t want it?” she asked innocently but Rick was already unscrewing the cap, taking three longs gulps without pause while staring at her unblinkingly out of the corner of his eyes. She couldn’t entirely hide the way some of the tension melted out of her shoulders and Rick skimmed his bio-readouts for poison.

“So you want to talk, Mooooorty?” he couldn’t help but taunt. “Is here really the best place?”

“May - maybe not,” she stammered, twisting her fingers into the hem of her blouse, unknowingly showing off the gentle curve of her rib cage. “But here you can’t run away, and you can’t change the subject, and you can’t –” her cheeks flushed, “-can’t distract me or whatever. You have to be honest.”

“Are you interrogating me, Morty?” His voice was an oil slick as he clenched the hand not holding the bottle around the bars of his cage. She shrank away from his look and he was suddenly furious. He’d been ready to throw it all away for her and this is what he gets in return? A cross-examination? He smoothed the loose flap of artificial skin over the metal joint of his finger and clenched his teeth. “Is this so your new friends have a –uuuuurrrp- laundry list of my crimes to put me on trial for?”

“What? No Rick.” She barely whispered the words, “It’s just us.”

“I’m supposed to believe those cameras are for show then?” he snapped, taking another sip of whiskey – fuck good whiskey went down smooth – and nodding his head to the two small pods so securely fastened to the walls.

“Ric told me she wouldn’t watch.”

Rick scoffed. “And you believed her?” Jeezus Morty was an idiot. No way were they leaving them in fucking privacy. They were waiting on tenterhooks to get the full scope of his awfulness – would undoubtedly use it as justification to execute him or otherwise warp Morty away from him. No fucking way did he believe they were alone with their conversation.

But Morty’s brow furrowed and she met his glare head on when she bit back, “Yeah, Rick, I do.”

“O-ooouh-hhhhh,” he burped condescendingly, raising his voice for whoever might be listening. “Did you hear that? You’ve really got her wr-aaauuuuh-apped around your manicured finger!” Morty rolled her eyes at him and he thrust his arm through the bars, palm up. “Don’t be stupid, Morty, now give me the key.”

She skirted away from his arm even though she was already out of his reach. “Rick they really don’t care about you.” He resumed his glaring while he took another long pull from the bottle. The liquor was already warming his chest and sloshing around in his empty stomach in a not entirely pleasant - but very familiar - way. He wouldn’t do this sober. If this was supposed to be his last meal, he was downing the whole thing. “They don’t want to – to punish you or kill you.” It was like she could read his mind and he scowled at her ferociously. “They’re actually really-

“If you say ‘nice’, Morty, I swear to god I will tear off my own arm and throw it at you.”

“I was going to say ‘levelheaded’.” Her smirk was a little too self-satisfied. “Anyways, just – can you just answer my questions? Please, Rick?”

Rick burped and leveled her a look containing all the heat of his rage.

Morty sighed but raised her chin. “So… you aren’t my Rick.”
“Th-aaaauug-at doesn’t sound like a fucking question to me, Morty,” he sing-songed, his dark voice taking any joviality from the tone.

“Rick…” Morty started faintly, hugging her own elbows. She glanced to the door, her brow furrowed, and Rick rushed to distract her from the thought of walking back out.

“No, I’m not the Rick from your dimension.” His tone was testy. “I didn’t personally create the sperm that fertilized the egg that grew up to be your mother.” He cocked half his unibrow at her and blinked.

“So you’re from some other dimension?”

Rick rolled his eyes. “Ye-aauuh-ah, that’s how this works.” He sipped at the whiskey and felt the weightlessness of being tipsy sink down to his legs.

“And – and you have your own Morty somewhere? One from your dimension?” she asked because of course that’s what she was worried about. Rick was surprised it took her so long to get to it.

“N-oouuh-o.”

Her eyebrow furrowed. “Did your Morty die?”

“No,” he bit back again.

“Did they go missing?” She was grasping at straws.

“Nope.”

“Are they –” she scowled and sounded angry when she continued, “-what are they too - too valuable to team up with? Did you need one that was more expendable to risk on adventures or something?”

“No – Jeezus Morty, you’re just fucking riddled with complexes.” He took another long pull of whiskey and when he sighed he could smell the alcohol on his own breath. He burped and studied the small girl on the other side of the bars. She’d been pampered and dolled up and undoubtedly showered with affection but she was barely holding herself together as she waited for his answer like the words might rip her apart. He cleared his throat roughly and loosened his grip on the metal, wobbling as he stumbled the two steps backwards and planted himself heavily on the concrete bench. “My dimension doesn’t have a Morty. It never did.”

He took another sip as he watched Morty’s scowl soften to a frown that she directed at her sandals, her teal-painting toes clenching, her small chest rising and falling with her heavy breathing. “Oh,” she said carefully, but he could see the gravity of her thoughts in the wide brown eyes that met his through the bars. “Why not?”

“Things are a little bit different in every dimension,” he answered, staring through the rock floor.

“So is there – did you not have a Beth?” she asked carefully, tilting her head.

“I had a Beth. Have,” he corrected when he caught Morty’s sympathetic pout. “She’s – still alive. Probably. I haven’t kept tabs on her in a while. She was… more independent than the one in your dimension.”

“How so?” Morty crept a step closer to the cell and Rick tracked the movement with reptile eyes.

“I don’t know, Morty. What do you want here?”
“Tell me about her, Rick,” she gently urged. “Why – why did you leave her to find a new one when you had your own?”

He took another long pull of whiskey. “A-aaaauh-re you a fucking therapist now?”

“Wh – Come on Rick, I want to know. Stop – stop gaslighting.” She looked about ready to slump back against the desk.

“Shit now you’re even using their language,” she wrinkled her brow in a pout so he quickly added, “but fine.”

He fucking hated this. He didn’t think about his Beth often and he definitely never talked about her but if Morty needed a fucking sob story to be won back over to his corner, she’d fucking get one. “She –” he started and then stopped, glaring at the dark bottle dangling between his knees before pounding back two solid swallows. “Her mo-oouuuh-ther died while we were separated.” He wiped his hand across the spittle pooled along his bottom lip. “I wasn’t around when it happened. And I didn’t know about it until a decent amount of time after the fact. I came back once I heard, obviously – Beth was young, younger than you – but well, we didn’t get along much after that.”

“My – the Rick from my dimension left,” Morty frowned thoughtfully, taking another small step towards the cell. “What about you?”

Rick leaned back against the wall and sipped at the lip of the bottle. “I came and went. Did the minimum requirement for the whole parenting thing.” He burped. “Probably less. I stuck around until she didn’t need-’ or want’ his brain supplied unhelpfully, ‘-me around anymore.”

“When she met Dad?”

Rick scoffed. “So-oooough-mething like that.”

She quirked an eyebrow and Rick didn’t wait for her to ask before continuing the story.

“Her and Jerry left for the dance. Beth came back with the genetic goo that would become Summer. And Jerry disappeared soon after.”

Morty looked horrified. “He left her? He left her alone and pregnant?”

Rick titled the bottle towards hers in a mocking toast, his eyebrows quirking while his mouth flattened into a thin line.

“Is that why…” she trailed off, her fingers twining together while she stared at the floor. When she lifted her head, something had changed in the depths of her eyes and Morty took another half step closer to the bars. “You never really liked Dad.” Rick raised his eyebrow and her hands clenched into fists when she bit out, “He’s not – dad’s not… dead… right?” with her face scrunched up like she knew she wouldn’t like the answer. “You wouldn’t – you didn’t kill him, right?”

“No, Morty, I didn’t kill your dad,” he mocked even as the back of his mind added ‘not yet’. But she exhaled like the weight of the multiverse had just slid from her shoulders and her visible relief curdled the whiskey in Rick’s empty stomach. He filled his glare with as much derision as he possibly could when he ground out, “He’s safe. Relatively speaking.”

His hard tone wasn’t entirely lost on her because her gaze darted away from him. “And – and he’ll stay that way?” she asked, her voice shaking.

Rick rolled his eyes. “Yeah, sure Morty.”
He watched her struggle to make eye-contact with him, her face screwed up in a glare. “You promise?”

He blew out an exasperated breath. “Yes, Morty, jeezus,” the acquiescence bubbled out his mouth, stirring the acid/whiskey mix in his stomach.

Whatever sugar shell had guarded her from the unfortunate truth that people could lie meant that his words were enough to melt the tension from her spine. Morty sighed loudly, almost comically relieved, and Rick wracked his brain as to how she could so foolishly believe him. He didn’t make a habit of lying to her but he was hardly trustworthy. Then again, as far as the adults in her life went, he was a fucking pillar of stability, a very sad fact considering who Rick was as a person. He gathered herself for a moment and her tone was cautiously light when she changed the subject. “So - so you have a Summer?”

“Yu-uuuh-p.” That was a much safer topic.

“What’s she like?”

“I don’t know. Haven’t seen her since she was –” he blew a little breath between his lips while he did the math, “– two? Just about two and a half.”

“Why?”

Rick took another sip and realized that he had, at some point, passed the point of being tipsy and moved on to drunk. His words were a little slurred when he mumbled, “Beth didn’t need me around anymore so I went my own way.”

“Oh,” Morty breathed out sadly and Rick hated that something in his gut tightened at the sound.

“What, ‘oh’?”

“Do you –” her eyes darted up from the ground to meet his and the depth of vulnerability sparking in her pupils made no sense when he was the one laying his past bare. “- do you miss them?”

He was fairly sure his face wasn’t scowling with the incredulity he intended when he answered, “Morty, I don’t miss anyone.”

And there was no reason for her to look as sad as she did when she whispered, “Rick…”

He spoke over her before she could continue, “And even if I did, missing people isn’t going to do anything for anyone. I don’t expect my Beth to waste her time missing me so I think it’s safe to return the favor.”

She crept another few inches closer and now she was just teetering on the edge of where his arm could reach if he stretched it through the bars. “I’d miss you,” she admitted quietly.

“Morty,” he growled warningly.

“Mom missed you – missed my Rick or whatever – before you showed up.”

He sloshed the bottle to feel its half empty weight before raising it to his lips. “Tru-uuuuuh-st me: my Beth does not feel the same way.”

Morty’s brow pinched skeptically but she had the sense to leave it alone. “So why my dimension? Why U-694?”
“Seriously?” He rolled his eyes. Of course she wanted some kind of _fate_ to have brought them together but the reality was it was just dumb fucking luck. “It was the first one I found with the right circumstances.”

“Right circumstances?” She shifted her weight and inched the tiniest bit closer. “Because my Rick was dead?”

“Bingo.”

“How did he –”

“Fractal explosion in another dimension,” he supplied immediately, tired of wasting his time. He’d looked into it _thoroughly_ once he’d settled in – determined to make absolutely positive some other Rick wasn’t going to show up at the door and ask for the Morty that had become _his_. Just look at all the good that precaution did. “Freak accident. But on Earth he was considered missing and on the Citadel he was labeled dead. Which is exactly what I wanted.”

Morty tilted her head and frowned. “What were you looking for? A place to hide out?”

Rick leaned forward, bracing his elbows on his knees. He waited for her curious gaze to meet his eyes before he answered, “I was looking for a Morty.”

A little breath escaped her lips, exactly the effect he’d been hoping for. “You were looking for me?”

“No – not exactly. I didn’t know you’d be –”

“A girl.” It was her turn to interrupt him. “Which is – _was_ – rare.” The soft swirl of chocolate in her eyes faded when she continued, “And you liked that I was different.”

There were landmines in that statement but Rick had never been good at disarming emotional distress. “Is that a question?” he snarked back on reflex and watched with a sinking sense of trepidation when her face stiffened into something cold and unfamiliar.

“Rick,” she said warningly and some gross, impractical urge to comfort her, to keep her soft, to wipe that disdainful look off her face used his drunken mouth to slur:

“Yes. I like that you’re different.”

Instead of making her smile, the admission made her pout. “I’m – I’m not anymore though. They were here, Rick; all the other Morticias.” She took one more step forward and she was finally close enough to lift a hand and rest it against the bars of his cell. “I’m not _special_ – I never was.”

“I guess not,” Rick agreed, screwing the cap back onto the bottle and pocketing it. Morty’s face was pale, an all-too-familiar swirling pit of despair opening up in the blacks of her eyes. Rick rolled to his feet, his steps heavy when he approached the bars carefully. He had to say something, he had to stop her from turning into Beth, turning into _him_, turning into everything good he ever poisoned with his touch. “Not –” he started, stumbling to a pause when her gaze turned up to his face. “Not on a _cosmic_ level at least,” he finished on a mumble and even Rick knew that as far as a reassurance, it was pathetic to say the least, but the intensity with which her eyes darted around his face - from his eyes, to his lips to his slightly tented eyebrow – told him she’d heard his garbled message loud and clear. Just like she always did.

Both her hands were circling the bars now and he heard the key clink, metal against metal. She leaned her forehead against the cell and mumbled, “If I – if I stayed…” he crossed his arms and stood carefully still until she finally worked up the nerve to breathe, “would you find a new Morty?”
“I don’t answer hypotheticals, Moooorry,” he growled, wobbling slightly thanks to the half bottle of whiskey sloshing around inside his guts.

“Come on, Rick,” she practically begged.

He breathed out a long sigh and ran his hand through his hair. “Hypotheticals... they’re just – there’s too many fucking ifs, Morty,” he started heatedly, scowling and bracing his hands on his hips. “If I stayed here, would you find a new Morty?” he repeated mockingly. “If they erased my memories then yeah, I’d probably find a new Morty. That’s what I was doing before I met you so if they took you out of my head, I’d be right back where I started.”

Morty was pouting and Rick was mad just thinking about it. “Maybe,” his drunken mouth corrected and he vaguely tried to clamp down on the inebriated words he could feel about to bubble out of him but the effort was useless. “I don’t know, Moooorry, that’s the problem with hypotheticals. If they erased my memories I’d notice eventually that a bunch of fucking time was missing. And I’m a genius so it wouldn’t be too hard to figure out where I’d been.” He kneaded at his forehead and closed his eyes. “And, okay yeah, this place is hidden pretty fucking well – no Ricks know about it at least so they’ve gotta be doing something right – but not a lot can stand between me and what I want. “So the answer to your stupid fucking hypothetical question is ‘no’, Morty,” he continued with new resolve, wrapping his longer fingers around hers and pinning her hands to the bars, but her eyes were starlight fire where they bored into his. “I wouldn’t get a new Morty. I’d come here and find you and I’d drag you back even if you were kicking and screaming. I’d fucking arrange the goddamn universe to find you, even if I didn’t know a single fucking thing about you except that you had once been mine and someone took you from me.” He was breathing heavily, and he hated himself deeply for the unintentional display of emotion. “Is that what you want to hear? Is that what you want me to say?”

She was practically breathless but that coy little smirk was back on her face when she tilted her head up to him and said, “Well, it’s not exactly what I was fishing for but I guess it’ll do.” He glared at her tightly through the bars. “Come on, Rick, no way you - you didn’t really think I was going to choose to stay here, did you?”

She was shooting him with a look that said ‘you idiot’ in the softest way imaginable. Something else whispered around the corners of her eyes and curve of her lips; something idealistic and saccharine; a fondness that Rick hadn’t been on the receiving end of for a long time – one that he’d never expected to see again.

He shook himself out of his fog and caught her wrist up in his grip, turning her hand over to reveal the key and sliding it off her finger. “I’m not just going to let this go, Morty,” Rick asserted, glaring at her from under his unibrow while he slotted the key into the lock blindly and twisted. “You know you’re going to pay for this little stunt?”

Morty licked her lips, her eyelids dipping while Rick shoved the door open with his foot, stalking forward to tower over her. “You promise?” she asked and Rick just about snarled.

“Do you have no preservation instincts,” he asked as he threaded his fingers through her hair and fisted the locks at the back of her skull, tilting her head up until blown black pupils met his. He bent his head down to her slowly, and he watched hopeful anticipation morph her face into something pliant and desperate. Her lips parted and the small huffs of her panting breath fanned against his wet mouth. When their noses touched, her eyes dropped closed and she was the one who rose the half inch up onto her toes to press their lips together.

It had been a long time since he had kissed someone but he was positive that the static charge that
sparked from the place their lips met and rocketed through every nerve ending in his body was a new experience entirely. It was like licking a battery or taking a fist to the stomach or snorting a line of K-lax except with any of those he’d already be on the downswing but he was still reaching new heights.

Rick felt the shiver that traveled through her body at the contact and his fist tightened in her hair, the grip angling her head better for him to run his tongue along the seam of her lips, suddenly desperate to know her deeper. But then the logical part of his brain reminded him where he was (or more specifically, who might be watching) and he reluctantly reigned himself in. When he pulled away, she tried to follow him, her small hands clinging to the lapels of his lab coat while a noise like a whimper got caught in her throat.

They were both breathing heavy when she blinked her eyes open and the universe exploded behind the whites of her eyes. “You chose me, Morty,” he whispered against her mouth. “Don’t forget that.” He bit at the plush flesh of her lower lip and chuckled when she keened.

Then he tilted her head down and landed a wetter, sloppier kiss to the center of her forehead. “Hey!” she griped but he was already reaching for the bottle of whiskey in his pocket hoping he might dampen the overwhelming tide of affection with another few sips of liquor.

He shot her with a flat look that didn’t douse any of the heat from her cheeks. Her lips were still red and wet and entirely too distracting when he muttered, “Most people don’t get that sort of honesty out of me and live to tell the tale.”

“Well,” she said, shaking herself out of her daze and touching the tips of her fingers lightly to her mouth. She smiled – too pure and happy for Rick to stomach - before she turned and wobbled towards the door on unsteady legs, “Maybe that’s cause I used the oldest Morty-trick in the book.” When she spun back to him, she was beaming, her cheeks rosy with a blush and her eyes bright with that something that Rick had started to really like. They swung pointedly to the bottle still pressed against his lips and it was a testament to his alcoholism that he didn’t splutter the fluid out when he caught her meaning.

“You got me drunk on purpose,” he grumbled, right as Morty rapped smartly on the thick door and it swung open.

Ric was stretched out on a chair, her feet propped up haphazardly on a blinking console while she used the full length of her body to reach the door from her prone position. A joint was pinched between her lips and her eyes were red and half lidded. “Morty!” she said happily as the door swung open, the front two legs of her chair clattering against the ground as she sat up. Her delight dimmed when she caught sight of Rick. “And the jackass,” she added with much less excitement. “Guess he passed the test.”

“What did you say?” Rick demanded dangerously, pocketing the whiskey in preparation for a fight but Morty spun to cut him a hard look.

“Be nice,” she insisted and Rick rolled his eyes and crossed his arms. Then a familiar green glow caught his attention amongst the blinking lights on the console. His portal gun rested on its side next to the plastic evidence bag filled with the inventions that had been in his pocket. They were so close, all he’d need to do was shove Ric over and grab them and he and Morty could be on their way.

“You’ve really warped her good, huh?” Ric continued, her stoner eyes blinking slowly at him like he wasn’t the most dangerous man in the universe and she was the only thing standing between him and his most valuable possession. “She didn’t even make it to morning – hell, it was barely a few hours.”
Rick was already coiling his muscles to strike. “Well, she is my Morty so-”

“Okay, okay,” Morty interrupted, leaning over Ric comfortably to snatch the evidence bag and the portal gun and thrusting them both into Rick’s chest. He huffed out a surprised chuff, shocked that he was being handed a pile of things that would only make him more dangerous. The momentary relief at the familiar curve of the portal gun handle was dimmed when Morty turned, smiling back at Ric. The woman rolled to her feet and landed a hand on Morty’s shoulder.

“You sure about this?” she asked seriously, her eyes locked onto Morty. Rick bristled at being so disregarded and he calculated how fast he could pull his pistol out of the evidence bag. “Ricks are assholes.”

Morty quirked a look at him over her shoulder and he breathed out a long steadying sigh. He couldn’t shoot Ric. Morty would lose her mind. And after she had so charmingly chosen him, he was reluctant to ruin that buzz so he busied himself with fishing his shit out of the plastic bag and replacing the items back into his pockets. “Pr – Preaching to the choir, sister,” Morty joked back and Rick pointedly ignored the indulgent smile Ric slanted down at her, especially when returned the pistol to his lab coat and had to manually uncurl each finger until its weight settled deeply into his pocket. He bent his neck until it cracked and curled his empty hand into a fist. “Thanks for everything,” Morty murmured much more seriously.

“I wouldn’t be thanking them just yet, Morty,” Rick grumbled, calculating the odds that they’d both get to leave with their memories intact. Admittedly they’d improved now that he was armed – a stupid mistake on their part – because no way was he going to let them tamper with his memories.

“What, why?” Morty asked, always the last to figure anything out. “We’re free to go, right?”

Ric nodded, smirking at Rick with understanding. “Oh I get it,” she simpered, her lips curling into that aggravatingly slow Cheshire grin. “He thinks we’d want you two to forget about this place.” She laughed, a deep, eerie facsimile of his own condescending chuckle. “No, Rick. We want you to remember. We want you to know that we’re around, keeping an eye on you. And we want Morty to know she’s got options.”

“What makes you so sure I won’t blab the location of your secret, vaginas-only tree fort to every interested party I can think of?”

“Because you’ve got your own secret to keep,” she answered, nodding her head towards Morty. “You really going to endanger her by getting mixed up with the sort of people who’d be interested in a space station of female Ric and Morties?” Rick scowled and hated that she had him so easily pegged. “Yeah, didn’t think so. We’ll keep each other’s secrets. I know you’re good at it.”

Morty was looking pointedly uneasy so Rick shrugged and burped again. “Come on, Morty,” he groused, pointing his portal gun at the wall and watching a doorway spiral out of nothingness.

“Bye Ric,” Morty said with a smile, giggling when the older woman leaned down and pressed a kiss to her forehead in almost the same place Rick had just moments before. He grabbed her by the bicep and silently ranked at the way she waved as he dragged her backwards into the portal, stepping out onto a barren field of dark violet soil under a crimson sky.

Chapter End Notes
THEY *FINALLY KISS*
Morty glanced around the softly sloped hilltop nonplussed. “Where are-”

Rick cut her off by bending over and pressing his mouth to hers again. Her lips were soft against his chapped skin. She gasped at the assault and he used the opportunity to lick inside, some deranged part of his animal brain desperate to consume her. She tasted sweet, like she’d just been eating dessert – chocolate if he had to guess - and he dragged her against his chest, nearly lifting her off her feet.

She moaned into his mouth when he ran his tongue over hers and the sound traveled straight to his groin. He might have to change his opinion of kissing if she kept making those unbearably small, teasing noises. And when she tentatively tangled her tongue with his, her movements unsure and timid and so very very her, a hot surge of victory set him trembling, his body so keyed-up he nearly came in his pants untouched. He broke the kiss off with a growl.

Her eyes stayed closed long after he’d pulled away and Rick greedily observed the wet sheen of her red, swollen lips. “Anyone ever kiss you before, Morty?” he demanded even though he already knew the answer. He needed to hear her say it. He needed to have all of her.

She shook her head, her eyes slitting open to reveal liquid fire pools of heat. “No, Rick,” she breathed, her hands finding his belt and latching on like it was a lifeline. “Just you.”

“That’s right, baby,” he whispered urgently against her mouth, stealing a small gentle kiss thoughtlessly before he deepened it, framing her neck with his hands to tilt her face. He wanted to lick her brain, trace his tongue over all the strange curves of her thoughts, discover the intricate flavors of her erratic behavior. Choosing him was madness; complete and absolute insanity, and he wanted to find the place she hid the glowing center of her feelings for him and crack it open like an egg, suck the yolk between his teeth and let it temper the simmering pool of self-hatred that always felt a little less hot when she was smiling just for him.

With one hand, he spun the dial on the portal gun and with the other he hefted her slight weight up. She squeaked at being manhandled but didn’t pull away, not even when she felt the prominent shape of his thickening dick rub against her stomach. Instead she rolled against it, her legs wrapping around his waist on instinct while he groaned into her mouth.

Distantly he heard the whoosh of a portal and he sidestepped through the thin film of atoms, but most of his attention was locked on his palm cupping and squeezing Morty’s ass, half supporting her and half guiding her in another squirming thrust.

Morty wasn’t distracted enough to miss the location change and she pulled away from him to take in the setting, her mouth dropping open while her legs unwound from his hips. Rick let his arms go lax and Morty slid back to her feet, her hands releasing the death grip she’d had on his lab coat to take a shaky step away from him.
She was gaping at the expansive bed taking up most of the room and Rick couldn’t quite grasp her disbelief. It was a relatively ordinary looking bed; draped in white linens and crowned with an absurd stack of pillows. It was of alien design so it was also practically a Transformer but she wouldn’t know that just from looking at it. And she’d seen tentacle aliens covered in hairy ball sacks and treated them with less surprise so Rick couldn’t grasp what was worth staring at.

He crossed his arms. “What?”

“W – what’s that?” she muttered and Rick genuinely questioned his continual attraction to her.

“What does it look like, Morty?”

“A bed – Rick, where are we?” she rushed to ask, taking another step away from him and turning in place to glance around the room.

“A hotel, Morty.” He thought it was fairly obvious: the pseudo modern but ultimately hideous wallpaper, the non-distinct furniture, the little table next to an armchair with two long-stemmed glasses and a bucket of ice. Sure, she’d never seen a Krootabulon mating hammock but that was nestled in the opposite corner and didn’t seem to have attracted her attention yet.

“R – right,” she mumbled distractedly, pacing over to the nightstand and studying the holo-phone.

Rick padded to the door and flipped the metal loop of the security lock over the corresponding rod. It thumped satisfyingly and he didn’t miss the way Morty jumped and cast a cornered-animal look over her shoulder. Her wide, round eyes set off sparks in Rick’s amygdala, his predatory instincts slinking to the surface of his skin as she jerked her head back around to continue pretending to inspect the nightstand.

“Summer and – and Mom are probably worried about us,” she said to the pulsing orb of energy that functioned as the room’s light source. She reached out a trembling hand to touch it and the color shifted from warm white to deep red under her fingertips. She gasped in surprise. “Ah – shit, sorry!”

“Mood lighting. I like it, Morty,” he smirked when she cringed. He fished his phone out of his pocket and wrote up a quick text, ‘Stuck in the middle of something, don’t wait up.’ The screen illuminated his face white/blue amongst all the red and he turned it towards her as proof. “There, I just texted them. No one will worry.”

He flipped his phone to silent and set it down next to the two empty champagne flutes. He didn’t love the obligation of keeping Summer and Beth posted about his and Morty’s whereabouts but it had only been a day since their idea of her safety had been turned upside down. He wanted to make sure everyone was happy and adjusting so there was no room for regrets. Keeping them in the loop was something Rick begrudgingly could submit to until everyone returned to ignoring Morty’s well-being like they used to. Besides, it wasn’t like he had to be completely honest with them; he just had to give them enough to keep them off his back.

“Oh,” Morty breathed and he could hear the hard sound of her heavy swallow from across the room. “G – good.” Under his half-lidded stare she twitched, skittering to the only other door in the room besides the one at Rick’s back and peering inside. “Oh,” she repeated, but this time with awe as she admired the tiled space.

Rick wasn’t surprised by her awe. In this neck of the multiverse, one of the most common lifeforms was a hard shelled invertebrate that had to take off its clunky exoskeleton to reproduce. Trouble was it couldn’t support its own weight without the shell so all sex had to be performed while submerged under water. That was why the room came equipped with a sizable in-ground tub – more adequately
described as a good sized hot tub than a bath – and the magnified glass ceiling opened up to an enlarged swirl of stars because this was a fancy joint and galactic bullshit really got their crustacean rocks off.

Rick stealthily padded over to stand behind Morty and was immediately rewarded when his casual, “Nice place, huh?” made her jump nearly a foot in the air. He cackled while she braced a hand against her heart and glared at him.

“Yeah, Rick,” she bit out while she glared at him skeptically. “This place – it’s a little too nice, isn’t it?”

“What, you don’t like it?” Rick asked, seating himself on the mattress and bouncing to test the softness. “Too bougie?” It wasn’t like Rick was particular; he’d just as easily fuck her in his filthy bedroom back home as this swanky place. He’d picked the room because he thought she’d like it – it had the right amount of common (the nightstand boasted a half used pad of paper with the hotel’s insignia) with just a touch of the spectacular (at Rick’s gentle touch, the orb of light split into a bunch of smaller pieces and drifted around the room like crimson fireflies). The idea that he’d thought about how to put her at ease made that cold, bitter monster that was most of his personality uncomfortable and he scowled when he leaned back on his hands.

It wasn’t like Rick thought Morty should cherish her virginity. It was a useless construct in a world trying to commoditize a woman’s body and sentimentality was a waste of fucking time. Hell, Rick had lost his V-card to a much older man when he was even younger than Morty. The guy hadn’t been particularly patient and the experience was far from the most pleasurable but life was full of small disappointments and Rick had learned that lesson early.

But he knew Morty and he knew how her stupid little brain worked and so her first time would be important to her. And Rick Sanchez refused to be a disappointment sexually. So if that meant fucking her in a clean bed in a nice hotel, he’d do it. Bathroom stall quickies and sloppy romps could come later – he had the rest of his life to fuck her silly cramped under the glass orb of his ship. He wanted to make sure she remembered the first time she came around his dick and that no aspect of the experience was anything less than stellar.

Plus it wasn’t like he was paying for the room – the portal gun bypassed the hotel’s security so they were really getting the trigger-finger discount. Though that shy, obtuse look she kept casting to the locked door was really starting to piss him off, especially since he’d put in the extra effort of consideration.

“I – I mean if you were tired why not just take us home?” she asked and he genuinely couldn’t tell if she was fucking with him or if she was actually that naïve.

“I never said I was tired Morty.” His voice was low and dark and he watched it travel down Morty’s spine in a shiver. “Come over here.”

It was fascinating seeing her react to the command: her steps were halting and unsteady, everything in her body language screaming reluctance, but still she shuffled forward, unwilling or unable to refuse his demand. What the whole process did for his libido was incredible.

She came to a trembling halt at the edge of his knees and Rick had enough pity left in his old bones to catch up her hands in his. Her response was almost instantaneous; the tension in her brow and lips melting into something soft – almost adoring – and she sighed when he pressed a kiss to the ridges of her knuckles.

Sometimes she made no fucking sense, even to a genius like him. “What do you want, Morty?” Rick
breathed against the smooth skin of the back of her hands, doing his best to fight off his near-constant scowl.

Her eyes were entirely black in the red lighting when she shakily whispered, “I don’t know, Rick.”

He smirked a long, wicked smile and asked, “Do you want me to decide?”

She couldn’t seem to raise her eyes past his knees. Her shoulders lifted and fell erratically with her labored breathing and Rick had to wait nearly a full minute before she swallowed heavily and nodded her head.

“That’s right,” he whispered, satisfaction dripping liquid pleasure down the back of his throat to pool low in his belly. “I’ve got you, buddy. You just leave it up to me.”

He spread his knees and pulled her between them with two palms on her hips. She moved where he directed her; a little stiffly but with no resistance. He traced the faint curve of her body, hands sliding from hips to waist to thighs and she shivered when the rough pads of his fingers traced over the bare skin of her legs.

“You let those psycho chicks dress you up, huh Morty?” he asked darkly, his hand edging under the rolled hem of her shorts. “What else did you let them do?”

“Nothing, Rick,” she answered immediately, her hands landing on his shoulders lightly like she didn’t know what he’d allow her to touch.

“You sure about that, Morty,” he taunted, pinching the supple flesh under his fingers and chuckling when she rocked up onto her toes. “What did you do with them?”

“We – I met a couple other Morties.” Rick’s hands stroked down the bare skin of her thighs and he again marveled at the warmth of her skin. “We just kinda talked…” she shrugged.

“What did you do with them?”

“They kept telling me how – they kept saying how nice the Palisade was and how happy they were with their Rics.”

“And you weren’t tempted to join their cult?” Rick couldn’t help but ask condescendingly, his hands kneading at the supple flesh of her ass underneath the denim.

“No, I-” Morty snapped out of the haze his hands had put her in with surprising ferocity, taking a half step back and slanting frustrated, devoted eyes down to him, her face filled with self-hatred.

“Jeez Rick, I – I never even really considered it. You really fucked me up good, you know.”

He chuckled at that, leaning back to take her in. She shuffled in place under his searing scrutiny. “Did I, Moooooh-rt-y, or were you already fucked up?” She blew a sigh out her nose and rolled her eyes, the harsh red light from the nightstand stealing the depth from the normally expressive planes of her face.

Rick frowned. The lighting was all wrong. He felt like he was in a strip club. Or a brothel. And the red light robbed him the pleasure of the flushed color of her skin or the molten shades of brown in her eyes. He reached his arm out and hovered his hand over the blob of energy and the color shifted back to a soft, warm white, the fleet of little fireflies morphing to match. The light was dim but bright enough to illuminate the tension melting from Morty’s pale face.

“Better?” he asked against his better judgement, his eyes raking over her flushed cheeks and chest.
She bit her lip and nodded her head slowly. “Good. Now take off my clothes, Morty.”

She blinked, a ripple of shock traveling from her bunched up shoulders all the way down to the clenching toes he could clearly see through the straps of her sandals. “What?”

He tilted his head back to give her a proper authoritative glare. “Undress me, Morty,” he demanded. When she gaped at him, nearly completely frozen in place, he goaded, “It’s not complicated, don’t make me ask again.”

That shocked her out of her stupor and her eyes raked over him from head to toe, spending a long minute bouncing between his eyes. Whatever she found there was enough for her to jerk her arms up in a half-aborted reach for his lab coat before she caught herself. Her uncertainty was a uniquely delicious flavor to roll around on his tongue while Rick sat and watched the dilemma play out on her face.

She opened her mouth like she was going to ask a question but thought better of it at the last minute. Rick suppressed a smile – watching her flounder was always a strange turn on; probably the sadist in him singing at her discomfort. But whatever he’d been expecting, whatever clumsy, awkward, unsexy ritual he’d consented to when he demanded she undress him, he hadn’t pictured she’d drop to her knees in front of him and pull his foot forwards with painfully gentle hands.

The sight of her slowly unlacing his shoes was so unbearably endearing he had to smother his too-wide, too-sincere smile behind his palm. He hadn’t really intended her to take off his shoes like he was some king and her a lowly servant – he’d figured she’d get flustered and pussy out once his shirt was off and he’d do most of the work. But that she started there – at his shoes of all places - was a strange attention to detail he didn’t think her capable of.

Once she’d loosened the laces and wiggled the shoe off, she cupped his calf with one hand and slid the other up his pant leg, finding the top of his sock and peeling it down his ankle and off his foot. She set the bare appendage back on the floor softly and the bottom dropped out of Rick’s stomach.

Nobody treated Rick gently – at least no one had for a long while, long enough that he’d almost forgotten what a soft caress could feel like or the way it could tie his stomach up in knots. It had been decades since someone faintly traced the hard line of his metatarsal bone with a feather-light touch like his boney old foot was anything worth the attention. And how much of his life had he spent telling himself those sorts of kindnesses, those small displays of affections, were for chumps? Rick wasn’t a chump. But his bare toes curled into the carpet, the faint line her fingers had traced along his skin still burning with the heat of her touch.

She moved on to his other shoe, her face flushed and shy as that dead thing inside of him jolted awake and tried to climb up his throat. Morty was so good and so sweet and so unexpectedly fierce and she chose him. She had been handed an out – a golden fucking ticket to splitsville – and she turned it down to stay with him.

She was just as gentle with his second foot as his first – maybe more so now that she’d had a bit of practice – and this time she definitely curved her thumb into the arch of his foot, the pressure sending a wave of pleasure up Rick’s spine like a long sip of hot chocolate.

When she turned her face up, he wasn’t quite quick enough in schooling his features and a little gasp escaped her lips before she clamped her teeth down hard on the plush of her pout, her eyes shockingly dark in the warm lighting.

“Why did you stay?” The words came out of his mouth before he’d thought them through and he hated that he’d asked something so vulnerable. She didn’t need to know how painfully curious he
was about why she’d chosen to stay with him. He’d built a lot of their relationship on the idea that he could read her mind and understand each and every one of her intentions but that dead thing trying to make space for itself in his cybernetic heart needed the answer like Rick needed oxygen to breathe.

“I dunno,” Morty mumbled non-commitally, her eyes dropping to the floor. Seemingly just to avoid his question, she pushed herself to her feet and Rick quirked up half his eyebrow. She eyed his body critically (carefully avoiding anything above his sternum) and Rick reveled in the sight of her cheekbones blooming stripes of blush. Eventually she caught up his hands from where they’d been resting on his knees, her touch tentative and light even while she urged him up to stand on his bare feet.

“Morty,” he growled, stepping closer and towering over her, filling her space up with his body. He leaned down to whisper directly into her ear, “You got your turn. Now I get to ask the questions.”

She fought off a shiver and lifted her hands, her palms landing flatly on his pecs and pausing a moment before she brushed them along his shoulders, parting the lab coat over his chest. He didn’t miss the way she used the gesture to hold him at bay and he snickered when she had to lean into him to trail the material down his arms.

“They were weird there,” she answered distractedly, her attention caught on where his sweater had snagged the sleeves of his lab coat and turned the fabric inside out. Once she’d pulled the coat all the way off his hands, she stillled, perhaps realizing that holding the two sides of it around his back had moved her very close to his chest and with her arms upheld and spread, she was almost embracing him. She dropped the coat and took a careful step back.

“Weird how?” he asked, delighted at the look she swept over him as she tried to determine the next least harmful item of clothing to remove. He was surprised when she tentatively lifted the hem of his sweater and started fiddling with the clasp of his belt.

The space between her eyebrows furrowed while she struggled to find an answer. “They weren’t weird,” she corrected herself with a frustrated pout. “They – they were really nice.” Rick rolled his eyes. ‘Nice’: there was that word again. What a fucking waste of time. Morty slowly unbuckled the leather and tugged it out of the loops, the length of it slithering around his waist as she pulled it free. When she held the full coil in her hands, she glanced up to his face and something glittered in her half-lidded eyes. He lifted his eyebrow, urging her to answer and her fingers tentatively loosened, the leather dropping heavily to the floor between them.

“So you’ve said,” Rick drolled, but the tone was more bitter than biting. Thankfully Morty didn’t seem to notice.

“Seeing you – well, a version of you – be so nice was weird,” she scrunched up her nose and Rick despised himself for thinking it was cute. “See – don’t you see what I mean? You fucked me up, Rick.”

Whatever she chose, the next article of clothing would reveal skin and Rick could see her working out which was the lesser of two evils. She settled – as he suspected she would – on his sweater, fistng the hem and trailing the backs of her knuckles over the skin of his stomach as she lifted it. His tank top got dragged along in the mix, her hesitancy to touch too much of him making it impossible to separate the two. “Everyone’s fucked up, Morty,” he said flatly, drinking in the reluctant way her eyes ate up every inch of his bared skin.

When the sweater was bunched up to his sternum she mumbled, “Duck - duck down,” and he acquiesced, lifting his arms and crouching so she could yank the sweater and tank top over his head and off his arms, turning the sleeves inside out. “Yeah but – I mean I should like it when a bunch of
“pretty Rick and Morties are nice to me,” she grumbled and Rick didn’t love the way she’d called those old crones ‘pretty’ but he kept that jealous thought to himself. “I shouldn’t be – why was I sitting around thinking about you when I was eating cake and getting complimented by Ric?”

A bubble of euphoria threatened to gurgle out of his mouth in a laugh but he bottled it down with difficulty. So she had been thinking about him. Good.

“And I know – I know you’re terrible-” Rick cocked half his eyebrow at that but Morty was too distracted by the winding path her warm fingers were tracing between the scars on his stomach, her soft touch shooting tendrils of pleasure directly to his straining cock. “-but sometimes I think I like that you’re terrible and – and jeez I must be crazy-”

She paused but Rick kept carefully quiet even though he would destroy galaxies to hear the rest of her thoughts. She took a step back to frown at the fly of his pants before tentative hands reached out, her warm fingers dipping under the waistband to unbutton his slacks.

“-I must be crazy because even if you’re terrible – even if you’re the absolute worst –” she unzipped his fly slowly, the backs of her knuckles grazing the throbbing bulge that was his erection. They both breathed out in tandem before she cut a tame glare up at his face. “-and sometimes Rick, you really – really - are the worst;” she pinched her lips together and tilted her head back, and Rick had the uncomfortable realization that he was being seen, actually seen, when he was so sure he kept himself better hidden.

Morty’s eyes weren’t clouded with affection the way they sometimes were, or blindingly bright with fear. The black stretch of her pupils was fearsome in its neutrality when she softly affirmed: “You’re the only person like you in all the multiverse.”

Rick did his best to twist the almost-gasp that puffed out of his mouth into a scoff. “I’m one of infinite Ricks,” he automatically corrected and Morty’s small warm hand cupped him through his slacks in a slow stroke before her fingers skittered to his hips and bunched the fabric down his legs, carefully leaving his boxers in place. She crouched to follow the fabric, her fingers skimming the side of his legs all the way from hip to ankle.

She glanced up at him and quirked her brow in a funny, disbelieving kind of way. “You know – when we wound up on the Citadel and I got separated from you, I kept thinking – I was so worried thinking ‘how am I going to know if it’s my Rick? They all look the same.’” She knocked his ankle with her knuckles, urging him to step out of his crumpled pant legs and he complied robotically, his full attention on the words spilling from her mouth. “But I knew it was you the moment I saw you – no question about it. Your eyebrow does this thing-” she furrowed her brow in a terrible imitation of his scowl, “and you – you’re way too agile to be seventy, jeezus Rick. And your eyes-” she cut off and the blush on her cheeks brightened to an impressive shade of red.

She straightened in front of him and bounced her gaze between the orbs in questions. He quirked his unibrow in challenge and she fidgeted, her fingers winding in the hem of her blouse. “What about my eyes, Morty?” he asked sarcastically, prepared for some disgustingly corny declaration and oddly desperate to hear it.

“Your eyes… they - they give you away,” she stammered, glaring hard at his sternum. “I know how you look at me. No one else looks at me like that, not ever, and I’d – I’d never mistake it.” If Rick hadn’t been glowering down at her through her confession, if he hadn’t been perfectly sure her fidgeting fingers stayed wrapped up in her blouse, he’d be positive she’d punched him in the gut. How many times had he thought the same thing about her? She swallowed heavily and met his gaze, her eyes burning with determination. “You’re my Rick. Whatever dimension you come from. And that – that makes you pretty special to me.”
Hearing her say it again, hearing her call him ‘her Rick’ was a suture over a wound he hadn’t dared acknowledge for fear it might be too deep.

She took a deep breath and reached shaking hands towards the hem of his tented underwear. “I – I don’t know, you messed up my head and so now I - I’m stuck with you.” She broke off to gasp when his erection sprang free over the waistband. Her fingers were warm where they skimmed his lower stomach, a barely-there touch that dragged the elastic hem over the boney ridge of his hips. Once they hit mid-thigh, she let them drop with gravity and he kicked them away.

Nude and fully erect, he towered over her and Morty trembled as she gaped up at him with that glimmer in the back of her eye spiraling out like a galaxy of stars.

“Stuck with me?” Rick growled, less out of anger and more to watch her throat bob when she swallowed. He gently pulled the flower crown from her hair and tossed it onto the nightstand, smoothing her hair away from her face with his calloused fingers. “You chose me, Morty,” he whispered against her temple, his sensitive, leaking tip dragging across the rough fabric of her shorts as he curved himself around her. “And that almost makes up for your little stunt with the cell.”

She faltered when he released her abruptly, striding past her into the bathroom and studying the vast array of dials next to the tub – distracting himself with the benign while his neurons skittered back and forth over her words obsessively.

Morty had called him special. Of course she’d think he was special – he was the master of her universe. But she’d seen that he was anything but, she knew first hand exactly how common Rick Sanchez was in the multiverse, but she still saw something different in him. And like a slap in the face he realized yeah, she’d been smiling at Ric and looking at her with more fascination than Rick could tolerate but Morty’s eyes had never glimmered with that spark she kept just for him.

He shook himself firmly out of his reverie and turned his attention back to the knobs next to the tub. There were roughly two dozen of them but Rick had enough of a grasp on the alien language they were labeled with that he could figure out how to start filling the tub with warm, aromatic water.

Besides boasting large tubs and skylight views for their invertebrate patrons, the ritzy hotel he’d chosen for Morty was also well known for the low-grade psychoactive drug found in the well they pumped all their water from. As far as tripping went, Rick considered it fairly mild – not too dissimilar from MDMA on earth – but when absorbed through the skin, it lit up a human’s pleasure centers like fireworks on the fourth of July. And for Morty who had never been skin to skin with someone before, it would blow her fucking mind. Rick smirked as water thundered out of the faucet, the rushing sound of it echoing off the tiled walls.

Once he was satisfied that the tub was filling to his specifications, he turned to find Morty peeking curiously through the door at him, her fingers wound up in her blouse again and tempting him with a stretch of pink skin. He hadn’t missed the way her eyes had darted guiltily away from his bent ass and he suppressed a snicker.

“You’re – you gonna take a bath, Rick?” she asked, and if it weren’t for how skittishly she held herself on her toes, Rick might’ve bit out a harsher retort but he swallowed the urge.

Instead he answered, “We’re gonna take a bath, Morty,” crossing his arms and leaning against the doorframe. “Your turn. Take ‘em off,” he gestured to her with a magnanimous wave and her eyes bulged.

“Wha – Rick?” she floundered, hugging her elbows and struggling to keep her eyes on his face. Her effort was valiant but she couldn’t entirely resist the urge to dart her gaze down to his stiff cock
jutting confidently away from his hips. His resulting smirk might have been a little arrogant.

“Come on, Morty, do a strip tease,” he goaded, grinning at the darkening shade of pink on her cheeks.

“Rick,” she whined even as her hands darted to the bottom hem of her shirt in automatic compliance and he gave into his laughter, his hand jerking out to catch her around the bicep when she tried to back away.

“No, you’re right, that’s way too advanced,” he chortled, his mind theater playing out how unbearably awkward it would be if Morty tried to be sexy. Her charm was that she never bothered to put on an act. “You want – you want Grandpa to take your clothes off, Morty?” he asked, voice sticky sweet as he sank to his knees in front of her. Even kneeling he rivaled her for height. “You want me to take care of you?”

He tugged her closer and smirked at the way her breath hitched when his fingers caught up her shoulders and spun her, hugging her back against his chest, his dick brushing against the smooth skin of her legs. He slotted his chin over her shoulder and wrapped his arms around her waist, their heads side by side and downturned to watch his pale fingers pop the first button loose. “This what you wanted, Morty,” he breathed against her cheek, his fingers working down the line, his palms broad enough to tease her breasts through the thin fabric of her shirt.

“Rick,” she sighed on a shaky exhale and Rick hummed in encouragement. Once the last button was undone, he parted the shirt over her heaving chest, one hand spread over her sternum and holding her steady against him while the other slid the scrap of fabric down her arms.

“That’s my good girl,” he praised, nibbling at the smooth skin of her bare shoulder and cupping her breasts in his hands, feeling her nipples pebble against his palms. Her back arched into his touch and he arched with her, intoxicated by the feeling of her skin against his. “My sweet Morty.” One hand skimmed down her stomach while the other plastered her against him, his arm wrapping around her chest to hold her upright when he unsnapped the button on her shorts and dragged the zipper down.

“Help me out, buddy,” he urged in a hushed voice and Morty’s hands jerked to her waistband, peeling the fabric down and shimmying her hips until her shorts slid down her legs and pooled around her ankles. Rick guided her to step out of them with one hand while the other dipped between her legs and massaged her through her damp panties. “Always so wet for me, Morty,” he smiled against her neck, trailing kisses and bites up to her ear. “I bet you’re dying to feel me inside you.”

She moaned when he dragged the last small scrap of fabric down her legs, leaving her in nothing but her strappy sandals. He sank to the floor, crossing his legs and dragging Morty to sit in his lap, his long arms stretching over her shoulders to unbuckle the thin cords around her ankles and tossing the shoes away once they were off her feet.

“Hold on tight, Morty,” he commanded and she wrapped her arms around his neck, her pink face downturned. It wasn’t exactly easy to pick her up and roll to his feet all in the same swift movement - it had definitely been doable when he was younger and in the prime of his life - but the mechanics littered throughout his body and her tight grasp around his neck made the feat manageable enough. She startled when he swooped her off the ground, clinging closer to his chest, her naked skin hot and plastered against him and Rick decided it had been worth the effort.

He nudged the bathroom door open with his knee and was happy to see the tub was nearly full, the deafening pound of water drowning out the soft pads of his bare feet on tile. He cut the flow, twisting the knobs with an easy nudge from his foot, and strode into the deliciously almost-too-hot
water, setting Morty’s bare ass down on the ledge so her calves dangled into the warmth that circled Rick’s waist.

“Oh,” she breathed out softly, dipping her fingers into the water and crossing an arm over her chest to rub at her shoulder, an unmistakable attempt to cover herself now that he had a full frontal view of her. Rick shot her a little glare – that she pointedly chose to ignore – and stretched out an arm to mess with the numerous dials.

“You know I’ve seen you naked before, right?” he snarked, shooting Morty a skeptical glance.

“Yeah Rick but – then – normally we’re, you know, in the middle of something crazy. Not just, like, hanging out in a fancy bath…” She crossed her legs pointedly and hunched her shoulders, suddenly looking a lot more like a gangly collection of wiry limbs than something with any sex appeal.

“You saying you want me to make this more dangerous?” he asked, holding his hand threateningly over the largest, most intimidating knob in the room; a huge metal wheel like the kind on a submarine door planted solidly on the floor. It turned on the shower but Morty clearly didn’t know that – not with the way her arm shot out and landed on his shoulder.

“No – no! This is fine,” she insisted and Rick might have teased her a little more if she didn’t look just about ready to jump up and bolt.

“Okay, if you insist, Morty.” With a little experimenting, the room filled with the low thunderous rumble of jets, the fragrant water stirring up with bubbles. Another few mixed attempts and the lights dimmed, the room darkening to a murky blue softly illuminated by the magnified swirl of Messier 83 above and the handful of small white firefly-orbs that had followed them into the bathroom.

Morty’s face tilted up automatically and Rick wasn’t sure she meant to voice the impressed little “Wow” that parted her lips. Eyes still glued on the pinwheel spiral of stars above their heads, she lifted her arms and gathered the wavy mass of her hair, pulling it over her shoulder and exposing more of her skin. The move wasn’t meant to be alluring – it screamed practicality and a lifetime with long hair – but it gutted Rick with intimacy and as she slid her butt over the ledge and joined him in the water, he couldn’t resist crowding her on the tile bench and leaning in to lick at the newly uncovered slope where her shoulder met her neck.

She stiffened infinitesimally but her gasp was anything but unhappy. “Morty, you fucking ruin me,” he murmured, closing his eyes to savor the shiver his voice elicited with his lips. When he leaned back, her eyes were wide and bright and full of trust and heat spiraled through his stomach like a drill.

Even as her half-lidded eyes scraped over the line of his collar bones, her fingers clenched around her hair in a white knuckled grip, and Rick didn’t like the excuse she’d found to keep her hands to herself. His fingers were light when they skimmed over her clenched fists, goading her to release her hair into his palm. “Okay, come here,” he placated, leaning up on his knee to tower over her, his long digits combing through her hair and gathering it at the top of her head. He didn’t miss the wide-eyed glance she shot his cock when it unapologetically prodded her in the shoulder, nor the pointed turn away and subsequent blush. He chuckled and his anatomy bounced with his mirth, her flush spreading to her ears.

When he’d finger-combed her wild tangles into something half-way neat, he held out a hand demandingly. “Give me the thing.”

“Wha- what thing?”
Rick wiggled his fingers to hurry her along. “You know, the thing girls keep around their wrists –” Morty tried to shoot him a glance but he kept her in place with a firm grip on her hair. She lifted both her hands out of the water and Rick realized she didn’t have the thin black strip of elastic that was a permanent feature on Beth, Summer, and just about every woman he’d ever spent time with who had hair long enough to tie up.

“I – what are you talking about, Rick?”

“How do you not have a hair tie?” he gawked, eying the silver thread she did have looped around her wrist – the one with the topaz stone. “Give me that,” he snapped, looping a finger under the chain. Morty slapped her hand down hard over his before he had a chance to yank.

“No!” she half-shouted, her voice louder than the ever-present hum of the jets. He watched her cringe at her own volume but her hand stayed locked over his fingers. “No, Rick, don’t break it,” she asked, this time quieter, and Rick was fairly sure he loosened a tooth with how hard he clenched his jaw.

“Why, Morty?” he whispered sinisterly. “Because that bitch Ric gave it to you?” The topaz glittered offensively where it dangled from Morty’s wrist, the teal stone (Ric’s favorite color his brain unhelpfully supplied in a mocking tone) catching the light of one of the firefly-orbs and spitting it back into Rick’s eye.

Morty’s grip on his hand softened and she smoothed her thumb over the back of his wrist consolingly. “I just – I think it’s pretty,” she admitted quietly, a weird catch in her voice. “I – it’s probably the nicest thing anyone’s ever given me, Rick…”

He tugged her head back by her hair and two big, innocent orbs met his angry glare. “Morty,” he warned and her fingernails clenched briefly into the skin of his forearm before her shoulders sank and her hand dropped listlessly into the water. The finger he’d looped through the silver pulled and he was surprised when the chain stretched like elastic despite the smooth, metallic links. What a waste of technology, Rick ruminated, as an equally bewildered Morty quickly slid her hand out of the loop before he could pull it taught enough to snap. He thought about breaking it on principle but the strange melancholy cloud circling Morty stilled that irrational, ferocious urge.

He knotted Morty’s hair quickly into a bun, the motion simple and practiced from a lifetime ago though Morty’s coarse curls were rougher than the silky blond locks of Beth in her youth, the thick texture more like his own.

“See Morty, I didn’t break it or anything,” Rick taunted, winding the chain around the base of the bun one last time and brushing her bangs flat over her forehead. He made the mental note to make her something more impressive than a stupid bracelet – ugh, what a fucking pain – but the idea of seeing her in nothing but whatever he concocted made the idea a little more palatable.

“Thanks, Rick,” she sighed, the tension melting out of her shoulders as he slunk back into the water and dragged her into his lap. She looked happy again and Rick supposed that was important in some small, stupid way.

The overwhelming feel of her wet skin demanded his attention and he absently rubbed Morty’s shoulders, smoothing his fingers over the silky planes of her back and kneading his thumbs into tight muscles. She sighed under his ministrations and shifted, leaning back against him and tugging his arms around her waist. He continued his fascination with her skin, brushing his fingertips lightly over her stomach and breasts, and she turned her head to muffle a wonton moan against his neck when he pinched at her perky nipples.
That was when he realized the negative thoughts that always circled the drain of his thoughts weren’t screaming quite so loudly – his senses softly overridden by a low-grade bliss just consistent enough to be artificial. So the drug laced water was starting to kick in. Good.

He was fairly sure his face morphed into dazed astonishment when Morty turned in his lap, parting her legs to straddle his thighs between hers in a surprisingly bold move. But if her dreamy, blissed-out gape was anything to go off of, she didn’t seem to notice his momentary shock.

“Is – is it just me or is this nice?” she asked, laying her palms on his shoulders and tracing the shape of his collar bones with her fingers. The slight edge of the drug made the sensation unusually exquisite, like every nerve ending had three times the receptors. “Like really nice.” When he scraped his nails gently along her back, she shivered.

“There’s ecstasy in the water, Morty,” he murmured, his voice raspier than he expected, startling himself with his own candidness. Oh well, too late to take it back now. “That’s –uuurrrp- that’s why everything feels so good.”

Her eyes grew comically wide and Rick couldn’t resist cracking up, holding her tight around the waist and practically purring at the softness of her breasts against his chest when she tried to scramble out of the water. “Rick!” she demanded, but her resolve faded a little as he ran his hands over her skin, licking along her prominent clavicle and squeezing the fleshy curve of her ass. She quietly almost immediately in his lap. “Rick, you – you knew and you didn’t bother telling me until now?” It didn’t sound quite like a question, more like a bitter acknowledgment of the facts.

“Come on, Morty, it’s making you feel good, right?” he whispered, his eyes fluttering when her hands absently started tracing shapes along his shoulders and arms.

She rolled her eyes but it wasn’t clear whether the gesture was out of frustration or pleasure and Rick hummed a quiet little laugh. “Don’t we need to be drinking water or – or something?” she asked with her eyes closed.

“Well, technically it’s not ecstasy: it’s an organic compound found on planets with an excess of copper in their soil,” Rick corrected, his hands sliding over Morty’s hips and thighs, kneading and massaging the supple flesh. “All the good stuff – none of the bad, Morty. Oh, except we’re gonna have some real f ** ked up dreams when we sleep it off.”

“Wait, really?” Morty fought off enough of the euphoria to look anxious – only she could still be anxious tripping on feel-good drugs.

“Oh yeah, Morty. I’m talking teeth falling out/public restrooms without stalls/Lovecraftian flesh eating space demon type stuff. A real psyche mind-fuck.”

“Oh jeez,” Morty whimpered but it broke off on a sigh when Rick’s thumbs found her clit and circled it with the calloused pad of his thumb.

“And where did you hear about the water thing?” he asked, finding it impossible to imagine Morty experimenting with drugs. She wouldn’t even try a sip of his whiskey.

“Summer,” Morty sighed, her fingers spelling nonsense on the skin of his stomach.

“Does Summer – what – go to raves or something?” Morty shrugged and Rick groaned when her hand dipped to toy with the hairs below his navel. “Man, I like that girl more and more every day.” Morty’s fingers stilled as she pouted and Rick laughed, leaning forward to wrap his arms around her and press their bare chests together again. The sensation was electric and his skin tingled everywhere
it touched her, especially where his erection nestled against the apex of her thighs. Morty must have agreed because she sighed out a stuttering breath and threaded her fingers into his hair, her hips jilting forward in a little unconscious thrust.

“So-” Morty cut herself off when Rick’s cupped her ass and lifted her until his cock slotted against her folds, rubbing along her slit in a way that sent sparks scurrying up his spine. “-So I might not hate this,” she sighed, trying to be stern and utterly failing. “But don’t make a habit of it, Rick,” she warned and Rick laughed outright at that. Oh, if only she knew.

“Hey, you wanted me in charge, didn’t you Morty?” he reminded her gruffly and she sucked her bottom lip between her teeth and circled her hips until the head of his dick slotted against her entrance and prodded at the hot channel. “You should know by now; I’m not a nice guy.”

Morty actually scoffed at that. “No shit, Rick-!” her voice titled up in a gasp when she tried to sink down onto him and he breached her pulsing heat by a centimeter. He clamped his hands down hard on her waist and stilled her determined downward motion.

“God, Morty,” her cursed, the tight clench of her already intoxicating and he was barely seated inside of her. “I’m gonna fill you up - I’m gonna find all the empty space inside you and make it mine.” Morty panted, her hands clasped over his as she fought to sink him deeper.

“Fuck,” she breathed through clenched teeth, her eyes watery and pleading.

“That what you want, Morty? You want grandpa to stuff you with his thick cock?”

“Yes, Rick,” she whimpered, squirming in his hold.

“Beg me, Morty,” he growled and let her drop just the tiniest bit further onto his lap, the head of his raging erection enveloped in a clench of velvet heat.

“Please Rick,” she started immediately, “I need it – I need you, please. I’m useless without you, Rick.” Hidden behind the lustful sparkle in her eyes was something deeper, something brighter, something so huge and hot and terrible it eclipsed the shadow of shame and anxiety that followed her every step and Rick was riveted, doomed to watch the spectacle even if it burned out his eyes. “I – please make me feel good, Rick, please…”

“You need me, baby?” he asked, suddenly ravenous for more of her words, more of her fragile desperation and unashamed dependency.

“So much, Rick. I – please I’ll do anything – I’ll be anything.” She was rambling, rolling her hips in a circle and slowly working herself open. Her clumsy mouth landed on his and when she bit his lower lip, he groaned. “I’ll be your human shield, your sidekick, your sex toy, I don’t care Rick just please…”

“Why should I fuck you, Morty?” He demanded fiercely, her eyes opening and slotting him with a molten gaze. “You think you’ve been good? You locked me up, remember?” He jerked his hips up and slid another inch deeper, the motion huffing a gasp out of Morty’s panting mouth. “You made me wait in a cage while you traipsed around town with someone else.”

There were tears in her eyes and Rick gave into the impulse to lean in and lick the salty trail off her cheek. “No, please Rick… I came back –” she begged, her hands skimming up his neck to cradle his jaw softly. “I - I came back to be with you…”

Her softness was disarming, and if he’d thought he’d seen the depths of her feelings before, it was nothing to the way she was looking at him now. It was like cutting her open and seeing how the pink
shapes of her organs fit together. With a growl he spun them around, pinning her against the edge of the tub and looping his elbows under her knees, nearly bending her in half. “Why would you do that, Morty?” he demanded, using the full leverage of his legs to sink deeper into her heat until he bottomed out inside her with a throaty moan. The stomach deep groan that she grit out between her teeth made his toes clench against tiles. “Why would you let your dirty old grandpa hold you down and fuck you, Morty? Why would you do that?” He needed to know, he needed to hear her say the words that were burning so savagely in her eyes he was sure they’d both ignite from the heat of it.

“Because I love you, Rick,” she breathed out on the most delicate sigh, her fiery eyes searing through him like a laser.

He should have been terrified. That was the feeling those words usually inspired. Fear or disgust or the slow inevitable widening of the gaping mouth ready to swallow him into the void. But instead it felt like he was the one doing the swallowing. He felt her confession slink through his insides like warm tar; noxious and sticky but sturdy enough to fill in all the pot holes and pave over the cracks.

Morty was gazing up at him like she half expected him to tear into her with his teeth and between the strange balm of her affection and the vice grip of her body around his dick, the ability to school his features was utterly lost.

He pulled out in one long slow stroke, both of them exhaling in tandem before he slammed back home, relentlessly. “Say it again.”

“I love you,” she gasped, desperate to please him, her arms looping around his shoulders.

“That’s right you do, buddy. I’m inside you Morty,” he couldn’t help but gloat, wishing for a moment there wasn’t a layer of swirling water obscuring the view of where their two bodies met. Next time. Morty’s head was tilted back, her eyes hazy and unfocused on the swirling galaxy above them. He braced a knee against the bench, finding solid enough footing to rock into her with shallow, rhythmic pumps. He wrapped his hand loosely around her throat, keeping her head tilted up while he leaned over to whisper in her ear, “I’m going to fuck you on all of those planets, Morty. I’m going to paint the universe with the sounds you make while you’re wrapped around my dick. Every star-system, every galaxy, every dimension is going to hear you scream my name.” Morty’s fingers clawed at his back, desperate for purchase as she rolled her hips as best she could to meet his soft thrusting, a breathy pant accompanying every shove. He loosened the grip around her neck and dropped her knees, pulling her into him by a grip on her thighs. “Fuck, look at me, Morty. How does it feel?” He had to know – he had to, because to him it felt like two galaxies colliding.

“Rick…” she whimpered but her eyes – starlight bright and locked onto him and so utterly, pathetically, devoted – told him she was watching the same explosion.

“I own you Morty,” he whispered feverently, his thrusts gaining momentum as he wrapped his hand around her small waist and slammed her onto him with gusto. “You’re mine. You always have been, Morty. Say it!” he snapped, his body speeding towards that perilous cliff.

“I’m yours Rick!” she sang out, her voice loud and laced with pleasure. It echoed faintly around the tiled room, bounced off the magnified glass dome displaying Messier 83 and rattled around in Rick’s chest like a pair of dice coming up snake eyes. “I love you, Rick. I’ve only ever been yours!”

He saw her orgasm hit her unexpectedly, her eyes screwing up tight as her teeth bit down hard on her lower lip. Her arms and legs clamped around him and she buried her face in his shoulder as she mewled out a stuttering groan against his skin.

“That’s right, baby,” he praised, riding her through her orgasm as his crested low and fierce in the
back of his belly, his hips jerking erratically. “You’re so good for me. My precious girl.” The hot vice of her pleasure was even better than he imagined, better than anything he’d imagined, and it was the soft fluttering of the muscles wrapped around his cock that did him in. He grunted unintelligibly as he came, jerking fitfully against her hips until they both trembled in overstimulation.

His wobbly legs could hardly hold him up and he was suddenly irrationally glad for the water’s help in supporting her weight in his arms. He spun them around, panting heavily when he collapsed onto the submerged bench, Morty’s knees still slotted against his hips and his dick slowly softening inside of her. He leaned his head back on the edge of the tub and guided Morty to nestle against his bare chest. She complied bonelessly, pressing her cheek to his sternum and wrapping her arms around his waist.

It was hard to say how long they rested there, Morty’s frantic heartbeat slowly calming while Rick tried to distract himself from his circular thoughts by mapping the galaxy above them with his eyes and tracing its shape with his fingers on Morty’s smooth back.

So she’d finally put a name to it; that something he’d been watching grow between the stars in her eyes since he’d snuck downstairs and shown her the galaxy.

*Love.* He breathed out a long, slow sigh.

Rick wasn’t stupid – objectively he’d seen the signs even if he had mostly chosen to ignore them. And yeah, he wasn’t exactly *young* anymore but he knew how teenagers thought.

Love was the idealized mythology humans gave the chemical stew that linked their genitals to their brains and encouraged them to procreate. It was artificial and misleading and even though on Earth it was all the rage – ultimately it was no more meaningful than a splash of dopamine, a pinch of serotonin and a series of neurons firing in the right order.

Rick brushed Morty’s bangs back from her forehead and dropped a distracted kiss to the crown of her head.

But if Morty thought she loved him…

If Morty thought she loved him it would work to his advantage. He wanted her tied to him and love (the word stuck like bubblegum even in his mind) would do the trick. And Morty was never going to grow out of her childish ideals. She wasn’t smart enough to embrace logic but she wasn’t stupid enough to be unceasingly happy so she had to latch onto something to guide her through life with some semblance of meaning. And bleeding-heart that she was, she’d chosen compassion.

So if she was going to fall in love with someone, it had better be him: he was a genius and a god and the center of her goddamn universe.

Besides, he wasn’t opposed to a little open adoration. Magnanimously, Rick decided he would let her *think* she loved him. There was no use in correcting her on it, at least – not when it made her so pliant.

When he was fairly sure his gentle stroking had just about soothed her to sleep, he shifted her in his lap and reveled in the miniscule gasp she breathed out when his softened member slipped out of her. He leaned over to turn off the jets and open the drain while he manhandled Morty out of the tub. She stood on shaky legs and afforded him a small, self-conscious smile that he soothed with a kiss.

The turbo-dryer adequately impressed her, a quick flick of a dial started a hum that syphoned the water droplets off their bodies with a variation of electromagnetics impossible on earth, and when she
winced as she took a step towards the door (previously unused muscles protesting their rigorous exercise) he lifted her up and carried her to bed, chucking her onto the soft covers where she elicited a peal of laughter he joined in on.

He wrestled the covers from underneath her and slid between the luxurious sheets to lay next to her, turning her over until she slotted between his chest and his arm, her head on his shoulder. He could feel coils of sleepy contentedness rolling off her in contagious waves but he fought off his drowsiness to stay on point.

Eventually, once her whole body had melted against his like epoxy she fulfilled his expectations by breaking the peaceful silence. “What’s that?”

He followed the line of her finger to the opposite corner of the ceiling. “A Krootabuuan mating swing,” he answered flatly, a little surprised that of all the things she chose to talk about – all the things he expected her to want to talk about – it was the complicated mess of strappy nets that warranted commentary.

“Oh,” she said with a yawn, rubbing her face against his bare pec and pressing a barely-there kiss to his skin before settling more heavily against his side. “Coolsies.”

The arm she was laying on smoothed a long stroke down her back while the other lifted to knead at his forehead. “Morty,” he started against his better judgment, rolling to lean over her on his elbow and trace his calloused fingers down her stomach. She flinched on reflex when he pet down her swollen slit and slid two fingers inside her, her walls still sticky with her fluids and his cum. “You have a part of me inside you and you’re asking about a Krootabulon sex swing?”

“Wha-!” she jerked and squirmed when he fingered his semen deeper inside her. She tried to slap his hand away but he was unrelenting, especially once he caught the fog of arousal shading her eyes. “You – you jerk! I’m – you came inside me, Rick? I’m not on the pill or – or whatever.”

He pulled his sticky fingers from her cunt and rubbed gentle circles into her clit, her mouth opening on a gasp as she sank her head back into a pillow. “I’m shooting blanks Morty, you think I’m insane?” he taunted, unnecessarily fascinated by the dazed gleam in her eyes. “One progeny was more than enough.”

“Phew,” she breathed, chuckling a little when he stroked through her short hairs and settled down next to her, side by side.

He tried to look through the evenly-painted ceiling to the galaxy beyond them, tried to count the stars he knew were on the other side of plaster and metal and rock, anything to keep himself from saying the thing his stupid/genius, drug-addled mind was dying to shape with his lips. “Anything else you want to talk about?” broke out with brittle flatness when he lost the battle.

Morty ‘hmmm’ed sleepily next to him and against his better judgement, he turned his head to watch her face in profile. She was frowning up at the ceiling, her eyebrows furrowed as she blinked heavily and Rick thought, here it comes – here comes the ‘don’t you want to say it back’ that so perfectly annihilated just about every more-than-casual relationship Rick had risked since he hit puberty.

“How long we got the room?” she asked instead, turning her head to blink at him with just a hint of that smile – the one he liked so much that said ‘what do you want to do next, Rick’; like she’d set the bedspread on fire if he told her to, no questions asked.

He ducked his head to press his lips against her shoulder before he had consciously made the decision to do so. Maybe Morty wasn’t quite so predictable after all.
“A-aaaauuh-s long as we want,” he answered, wrestling her to roll over him, curving his bicep under her head and tangling his legs with hers. “It’s not like we’re paying for it.”

Morty’s eyes popped and she struggled to glance worriedly at the door. “Wha – Rick, what – someone might try to come in!”

Rick curled the arm around her waist tighter, holding her against his chest and stilling her anxious squiggling. “The door is locked, Morty,” he promised, his voice a little less than comforting. “Besides, this room is reserved for Sectist political dignitaries and I know for a fact they are wrapped up in a revolution thanks to some missing religious texts so we’re in the clear.”

Morty reluctantly stilled and she glared between his two eyes before she sighed and burrowed into his hold.

“Jeez Rick, can’t do anything the normal way, huh?” she chided lightly and Rick chuckled at the unmistakable warmth in her tone.

“And be boring? Never, Morty,” he answered, burying his nose in her hair.

Okay, so maybe she wouldn’t need to talk about it. And Rick definitely didn’t need to talk about it so that was great. Fucking perfect really. And if he wanted to hear her say it again, that was just irrational and he could wait for her to come up with the idea on her own. Undoubtedly she would. She never kept anything to herself.

His eyes were getting heavy, the adrenaline rush of endorphins retreating now that they were out of the drug-laced water, his brain desperate to replenish its missing chemicals with sleep. “These dreams,” Morty murmured against the skin of his chest, the words muddled with her own exhaustion. “How – how bad are they gonna be, Rick?”

“Pretty bad, Morty,” Rick whispered against her sloppy bun and tucked her a little closer to his chest, desperate to feel her skin everywhere against his. “But don’t worry, buddy. I’ll be right here.”

“Yeah,” she said so quietly Rick figured it wasn’t really meant for him. “Okay.” Then the endless black space of the cosmos reached out and swallowed him whole.
Rick dreamt he was in space. No, that wasn’t quite right because his body wasn’t bloating up, his lungs suffocating in the freezing cold – hell he didn’t have a body at all. There was only his mind drifting aimlessly, timelessly through the black.

Slowly, like piecing together the broken fragments of a mirror, he realized he wasn’t in space, he was space. He was the vacuum of nothingness that hung between every star and planet in the universe, every asteroid and rock, every outstretched frozen human hand and unreachable wall of silica glass.

And as was his nature over the endless march of time, he dragged everything apart, stretching and expanding until no planet could support life, the light of every star too dim and far away to warm anything but themselves, every orbit stretched past the limits of gravity’s pull, the nebula swirls of galaxies so wide and spread out they looked like crumbs scattered across a coffee table.

His consciousness drifted between worlds. He was impartial as he watched civilizations die, life-forms scurry to survive, plants rushing to evolve, micro-organisms duplicating uselessly, endlessly, fruitlessly until the eternal freeze of his expansion wiped them all out for good.

Beautiful skies of rich purples and reds were choked out by smoke, molten planets self-destructing under the pressure of annihilation. Rolling seas of pearlescent whites froze to solid black, no light left to make them glimmer.

Nothing survived. Rick’s very existence was the harbinger of doom. And he watched the galaxy crumble under his unyielding touch.

And far off beyond all the worlds that Rick recognized and millions that he didn’t, a small nebula of warm dim stars burned yellow and gold from a distance, their surfaces alight with ultraviolet shades Rick had never seen with his human eyes. The clump of lights shined fierce and steady, small but unimaginably strong. They were tightly clustered together when he found them, useless in a galaxy with no planets to offer light or warmth, but beautiful none the less.

For the first time in so very very long - a lifetime, a million lifetimes, since Rick had become a terrible void - he let himself want. He wanted to feel their heat but he had no skin. He wanted to taste the whorls of energy dancing between their orbits but he had no tongue. He wanted to bury himself in their molten cores and forget – just for a little while, for a moment or a thousand or a million or forever – that he was empty space while this burning mass of stars was alive and bright with energy.

But there was no stopping time.

The stars drifted apart, fading as the pieces that had once fit together were dragged farther and farther apart and Rick was left standing in the hallowed space that used to be a riot of light and heat and life.

And the stars dimmed as they expanded. Their zest fled and they morphed from gold to red to ghostly pulsating orbs of gas, white smears of memory that haunted Rick’s periphery. He wept tears without eyes as they drifted farther, farther until they were out of sight and he was alone again in the dark.

Rick blinked. The small glowing orb of light didn’t make sense to his brain when he expected more cold empty blackness and his heart did a weird flip flop while the air left his lungs in a rush. He
blinked again, a trail of tears leaking from his eyes – because he very much did have eyes – and dripping down his nose to plop against the silky-smooth pillowcase under his cheek. The light he was staring at vacantly wasn’t a star. Obviously. It was the light on the nightstand that he hadn’t thought to turn off. He glanced around the room and wondered if the net of wandering firefly-lights played any inspiration for his dream, his stomach still bottom-heavy from the nightmare.

Morty groaned and Rick realized he was still twined around her like a snake. He pulled back enough to watch her sleeping face furrow into a pitiful scowl and Rick squeezed her tighter against his chest. If her dream was half as fucked up as his, she’d be devastated for a week. But she had to sleep it off, it was the nature of the compound. It made you feel fantastic but just like everything good in life, the effects were fleeting and it came at a price.

With minimal contempt, he wiped the tears from his cheeks and thoroughly locked down the foggy memories of his dream, determined to never again think of those fading yellow stars and how empty he’d felt when they’d broken apart. Dreams were meaningless. They weren’t tangible or measurable and they certainly weren’t science and as such evaluating them for meaning was nothing but a massive waste of his precious time.

It was only a few minutes before Morty started to stir fitfully, her heartbeat skyrocketing while she cringed into his chest instinctively. Rick carded his fingers into the loose hair at the base of her neck until she jolted awake with a full body spasm. Her eyes were wide and fearful when they landed on his face and for a moment she must have still been lost in her dream because her mouth opened in a near-silent gasp.

Then a steady stream of tears poured from her eyes like she’d twisted the tap on a faucet. “Shh, Morty, it’s okay,” he soothed, rubbing his palms along the smooth skin of her arms in an attempt to calm her down.

“R – Rick?” she spluttered thickly through her tears, her voice quavering as she leaned away from him.

“Just a dream, Morty,” he reassured her, her body tense as a tightly coiled spring under his fingers. He gripped her hard by the upper arms when she half tried to tug away, the whites of her eyes visible all the way around her pupils as she jerked her head to look over her shoulder.

She glanced around the room panting for breath while Rick held her steady. “Just a dream,” she murmured to herself, her muscles slowly unbunching under his hands. “Right, cause of the – the tub ecstasy or whatever.” She sighed, her heart rate slowing as she smoothed her rumpled bangs over her forehead, swiping the tears off her cheeks with her wrist and laughing in an empty, self-deprecating kind of way. “Jeez, Rick, let’s - I don’t think I want to do that again.”

“Give it time, Morty,” Rick chided, unwinding his legs from around hers to sit up and tilting his neck until it cracked. He mulled over his next words carefully but kept his tone light. “You had fun, didn’t you?” It was the closest he was willing to get to asking her if she was okay with what had happened because that useless worry had been drifting around in the back of his mind since he’d carried her to bed. She had sure looked like she’d had a good time. And she’d cum fairly spectacularly. But some disgusting corner of his mind needed verbal confirmation.

Morty shivered, rubbing her eyes and shaking off the last dregs of her dream before she sat up. “I – yeah Rick it was fun but that dream was not worth it.”

Part of Rick stalled over her words, dragging his mind over her fatalistic tone and her downturned face and her fingers busy picking at a chipped edge of teal nail-polish. Did she regret everything or just the drugs with their too-real-to-just-be-a-dream nightmares? “You pussy,” his mouth
automatically snapped. “In ten minutes, you’ll hardly remember it.” Then, against all logic, he added, “What did you dream about?”

She stiffened before her hand jerked up and unwound the silver tying her hair up in a bun, her dark locks rushing around her ears and curtaining his view of her face. She looped the bracelet back around her wrist and Rick scowled while she ran her fingers through her even messier than usual waves. “Oh jeez, it – it didn’t really make any sense.” He quirked half his unibrow at her when she glanced over her shoulder and her eyes dropped to the covers. “A black hole,” she faintly volunteered and it didn’t take a therapist to guess that he had been the inspiration. The idea didn’t upset him. He was above that sort of emotional bullshit.

In fact, after a moment of pointed self-reflection, he decided he kind of liked the strange designation she’d given him. He was a black hole. And if the way she still leaned into the hand smoothing down her arms in long strokes was anything to go off of, she had already passed the event horizon.

His eyes met hers and he saw his own vast empty space reflected back at him in the pupils of her eyes. He gestured to the ground. “Grab my lab coat, will you Morty?”

She blinked out of the trance, sliding out of the sheets to pick up his lab coat and lay it onto the bed next to him, the various pockets bulging with gadgets. The first thing he snagged was the whiskey, tilting the bottle back and taking two deep swallows.

Morty was studying the ground around her feet, clearly searching for her clothes so Rick snapped out a hand and caught her wrist up in his grip before she could pace away from the edge of the bed. “Where do you think you’re going, Moooo-ooouuh-ry?” he taunted and she stiffened.

“Shouldn’t we –” she started to stammer while Rick wiped the dribble of whiskey that slid down his chin off with the back of his wrist. “- R – Rick, don’t you think -”

“Get back in bed, Morty,” he growled and her mouth snapped shut so quickly her teeth clacked. She obeyed him robotically, her eyes going a little foggy as she crawled back onto the crumpled bed sheets. “I’m not done with you yet.”

“Ah jeez, Rick,” she whispered under her breath and Rick chuckled heartily.

He leaned back against the headboard and watched with heated eyes as she slowly shuffled to his side and settled down on her folded legs, her arms crossed over her chest as she hugged her own elbows. She was trying to be shy again and a traitorous pool of warmth settled low in his stomach.

“Turn around, Morty,” he commanded and after a tentative look up her eyelashes, she complied, kneel-shuffling to face the bottom of the bed, her bare hip pressed against his. “Straddle me.”

She swept all her hair over one shoulder to cut him a hot glance. “Rick?”

“Morty,” he responded darkly before he took a long sip of whiskey. Her eyebrows furrowed before she slowly lifted the leg pressed against his thigh, dragging her knee over his stomach until it hit the mattress on the other side of him and her slight weight settled above his hips. “That’s a good girl,” he soothed, tucking the open bottle between two pillows so he could run both his hands along the curve of her waist from her ribcage, down to her hips, and back again. Liquid brown eyes met his over her shoulder and he felt his dick give an interested twitch as it thickened.

The motion didn’t go unnoticed by Morty who laid gentle hands on his thighs, her thumbs tracing the prominent ridges of his hipbones lightly. His dick jumped again and she breathed a little excited gasp out on an exhale.
“Up on your knees,” he directed, his hands guiding her hips as she rose above his stomach. “Now—uuurp—now lean forward and put your face on the covers, Morty.”

“What?” she squeaked, her upper body twisting so she could gape at him.

“You heard me, Morty,” he responded, turning her back to face the foot of the bed and wrapping an arm around her lower stomach where her body bent at the waist. He sat up enough to hug her ass to his chest and press down firmly between her shoulder blades until her chin met the mattress between Rick’s knees. Her arms draped over his thighs, her fingers fisting in the bedding next to his legs.

“Oh jeez,” she whispered against the sheets and he chuckled.

His cock gave another determined pulse against her stomach when he sat back to take in the view. Her folds were glistening already with arousal, the dried remains of his spend from the previous evening still clinging to her inner thighs in a flaky trail. He palmed the smooth, round globes of her cheeks absently, enjoying the feminine shape of her small ass narrowing to skinny legs, his hand following his eyes.

His finger automatically traced their way to her cunt, spreading her labia so he could admire the wet sheen of her lips and hole. Her thighs trembled at his touch and he could feel her labored breathing puffing hot against his leg.

His erection reached its full potential and slot along the stretch of her stomach, reaching for friction, but that could wait for later. He needed to remind her that black-hole or not, she chose him. And there were no takebacks with Rick Sanchez.

With one hand, he kneaded the supple skin of her ass while the other traced along her slit, barely breaching her teasingly before continuing on the path to her clit. She gasped and Rick grinned when he felt her press her forehead to the side of his knee.

“Feel good, Morty?” he asked, circling her clit with feather-light pressure, the calloused pad of his thumb faintly rubbing over the sensitive bundle of nerves while his middle finger gently stroked the skin around her wet opening.

“Yes, Rick,” she breathed against his leg, her hips rolling intuitively against his hand. He blindly found the precariously balanced whiskey bottle with the hand not occupied with her cunt and took a long pull.

“Go-ooouh-od,” he burped, dipping his finger shallowly into her channel and feeling her warm, tight walls flutter against the intrusion. Gently and slowly, he prodded into her, never surpassing the first joint of his finger. He sipped at the whiskey bottle and gently rubbed at her clit with his thumb, the pressure never enough to be anything more than teasing, his hand following her when she tried to thrust back into him to take more of his digit inside of her.

The noises she was making were exquisite to Rick’s ears. First shy and breathy, then ragged and desperate as he wound her up endlessly, taking his time pushing her to the edge of desperation while he slowly finished off the bottle, enjoying the smooth burn of good whiskey and the enticing way she rolled her hips progressively more wildly against his hand, her skin flushing and shining with moisture.

Once her thighs were quivering, he tossed the empty bottle over the edge of the bed to brace her hips from their mindless rolling. He was fairly sure the groans and whimpers she muffled into the bedspread were mostly in the shape of his name and her fingers had given up their purchase in the covers to grasp at the backs of his knees.
“Talk to me, Morty,” he goaded when he was fairly sure he caught the tail end of a frenzied sob.

“Rick,” she gasped like she was dying and he was her last breath of air. “Fuuuuuck,” she cursed, dragging the word out emphatically.

“You have to tell me what you want, Morty,” he pressed, twitching the tip of his finger inside of her and eliciting a whole new timbre of moans.

“I – Rick I want more,” she begged, her voice muted by the covers.

“I need more direction than that, Morty.”

“Rick,” she whined, burying her nose between the back of his knee and the sheets. “Please.”

“Please what?” She keened inarticulately from the back of her throat and her nails bit into the skin of his thighs.

“Grandpa, please;” she pleaded and his whole body sizzled with excitement, his cock giving a mighty pulse as he felt a dribble of precum leak from its tip. She hardly ever called him that – had never used the familial title while they were fucked around – and the sneaky little minx must have figured out that his endless depravity reveled in the reminder that on earth, she was supposed to be expressly forbidden to him and there was nothing he loved more than breaking rules. It was his turn to roll his hips thoughtlessly until the tip of his dick nudged against her soft stomach.

“That’s right, Morty. You’re grandpa’s precious girl,” he praised, rewarding her with another inch of his finger even if she hadn’t quite hit the mark on what he wanted to hear. She moaned and writhed like he was electrocuting her from the inside out and the warm velvet clutch of her around his digit was pushing his blood to the boiling point. He leaned in to lick a fat stripe over her puckered asshole and her channel clenched.

“Oh fuck,” she gasped against his knee, rocking back against his face when he tried to pull away. He chuckled, nipping at the globe of her pale cheeks and swatting one with his free hand, marveling as a red handprint bloomed on her skin.

“I can do whatever I want to you, Morty,” he stated magnanimously, “Isn’t that right?”

“Yes, Rick!” she panted.

“I could swallow you whole, couldn’t I, bud?” he asserted, reaching his free hand down between her thighs to fist his pulsing erection. “You’d let me do anything, wouldn’t you?”

“Rick, please, I – I need more;” she begged, her teeth finding the skin of his thigh and biting down.

“You want me to fuck you, Morty?” he bit out, fighting his own desire to sink his finger into her to the knuckles.

“God yes, Rick,” she moaned.

“Make me believe it.”

Her small hands appeared around the curve of her thighs, his attention laser-point focused as they trailed up her legs and over the curve of her ass, her fingers finding the fleshy lips of her labia and spreading them apart to bare her sopping slit at him obscenely. Rick groaned at the invitation.

“Fuck me, Rick,” she demanded. “Fill – fill me up, Grandpa. I need it –” He twitched his finger,
gently curving it to prod along her walls. “- oooh fuck –” she gasped and Rick chuckled. “I need you so bad, Rick.”

“Why, Morty?” he growled, pulling his finger from her and shoving her off his hips, turning her over and wrestling her underneath him until he pinned her from heaving chest to tangled legs.

He didn’t realize until he caught sight of her flushed cheeks and lust fogged eyes how much he had missed watching her thoughts and feelings flitter under the clear water pool of her expressions. He caught up her wrists and held them to the bed next to her head using a knee to leverage his hips between hers, but she put up no resistance, her thighs spreading to give him more room.

“You have to tell me,” he groaned into her ear when the tip of his cock slid against her sopping folds. “Say it again, Morty.”

“Fuck me, Rick,” she whimpered but that wasn’t what he’d wanted and he bit down on the fleshy lobe of her ear until she keened.

“Not that.”

She arched her back until her pebbled nipples rubbed against his chest and he swooped in to take her mouth in a fierce, sloppy kiss, his tongue plunging into her mouth like he could write the words he was looking for on the back of her throat.

She was panting when he pulled away, his teeth still nibbling on her lower lip and dragging it away from her mouth until he released it with a wet pop.

“Fuck me, Grandpa?” she said softly, almost a question, glassy orbs filled with confusion as he bared his teeth in frustration, slipping a hand between them to guide himself to her entrance and prod into her velvet heat.

It was written all over her face – the thing that he wanted her to say, the thing that he needed her to put into useless words. It was sparking in the fire of her pupils and glistening in the sheen of her lip as she sucked it between her own teeth and bit.

Her eyes, burning bright with starlight, raked over his features, her brow furrowed up with something almost like concern as she struggled to find what would appease him. But he couldn’t ask for it directly. It was meaningless to ask for it directly. And if she knew how much he wanted it, he would never live it down.

“Say it,” he commanded again darkly and the blinding nebula that exploded in the blacks of her eyes clued him in the moment she understood.

“I love you, Rick,” she breathed, light as a feather, the sliver of brown around her dilated pupils warm and soft. She whispered the words against his lips, her nose nudging along his gently, sweetly, and the thing tethered to his heart pulsed with pleasure. “Please, Rick. I want to be yours Rick. Only yours. Please.”

He pushed into her softer than he intended, her passage tight like a vice but pliant and unresisting. When he was fully seated inside her, their hips slotted together, their sweaty chests pressed tight against each other, he breathed out a long deep groan.

“Yes,” she sighed, her lips pressing miniscule kissing along the hard line of his mouth.

“What do you say, Morty,” he growled as he pressed into her deeper, as deep as she could take him.
“Thank you, Rick,” she wailed as he pulled out to slam back home hard enough to push her up along the bed. He released her wrist to wrap his long arms around her shoulders, leveraging her into the second brutal thrust he pushed inside of her. “I love you,” she screamed when she had no room to escape from the second thrust.

“You fucking need me, Morty,” he vowed, pressing his forehead against hers and boring down at her with a hard look. Her vehement nodding was interrupted by another hard roll of his hips. “I’m the center of your fucking universe, Morty.” He rose up above her and marveled at the sight of her thin body below him, the red, wet girth of his erection spreading her folds and disappearing into the her, her stomach tapering into the thatch of hair that marked the place they merged. Spread out below him, flushed and sweaty, her eyes brimming with tears and lust and need, he felt like the most powerful being in the multiverse. When the sight of her stretching to envelop him threatened to throw him over the edge, he lifted his gaze to her blissed-out features, devotion stamped across the stars in her eyes.

He caught up her ankles and gripped both of them in one hand, the new clench of her legs tightening her channel and changing the angle of his penetration. He squeezed her knees together with his other hand, pressing her straight legs along the line of his upper body while her toes clenched next to his ear. “I’m your god, Morty,” he purred, his vision tunneling to the swirls of galazies pulsing from the back of Morty’s eyes.

“I know,” she sighed, almost happily, and Rick felt his balls clench up at her gentle admission, one of her fists unclenching from the bedspread to reach for his face. He leaned into the touch and her fingers were searing hot where they cupped his jaw “Don’t you fucking forget it,” he whispered, the words not nearly as biting as he’d meant them.

Then Morty’s eyes rolled back into her head and her whole body tensed like a wire, her back arching off the bed, her cunt tightening around him deliciously, squeezing out his own orgasm. His hips stuttered in their pattern as he spurted inside her, the hot rush of his own fluid enveloping him. He fell to his hands and knees, hovering over her, her legs sliding off his shoulder to loop over one of his thighs as they panted in each other’s faces, too tired to roll apart. When she started gently kissing his unresponsive mouth, nibbling at his lower lip and licking at the crease, he decided it wasn’t so urgent to climb off of her.

She let out a pleased little hum when he puckered his lips and returned her soft kisses. So it was going to be like that with them, huh? It wasn’t what he’d been expecting but the red-hot coil of affection in his chest seemed to have soldered itself to his cybernetic heart. He breathed out a long sigh against Morty’s face that tickled the hair in front of her ears and set her giggling before he reluctantly rolled off of her to lay side by side.

When he felt the bedspread dip next to his hand, he knew what was coming and shifted his palm so her smaller fingers could slide under and interlace with his.

He could hold her hand. Whatever, no bid deal. He could kiss her. He could make her scream his name in ecstasy and breathe meaningless platitudes against his lips. If it were someone else, no fucking way would he put up with that sort of bullshit. But Morty – Morty was special. She was his perfect little buddy. And if those things made her happy, kept her pliant and docile, well, Rick could live with them too.

He carefully tilted his head and studied her calm, contented, neutral features out of the corner of his eyes. Her eyelids were gently closed, her face upturned to the ceiling, the flush fading from her cheeks while just a hint of a smile tickled the skin around her mouth.
Then her eyes blinked open and she caught him watching her, a shy, toothy grin giving way to self-conscious chuckle before she leveraged herself up and out of the bed.

Morty gingerly picked around the room and Rick swiveled his head to watch her move around. She cast him a sideways look before her cheeks flushed and she crossed her arms over her chest – bashful from the weight of his hot stare – while she found her discarded panties and started shimmying them up her legs.

“Who said you could get dressed, Morty?” Rick growled and she stilled like a deer after the snap of a twig, her underwear halfway up her thighs.

“Wha – what time is it, Rick? Shouldn’t we be getting home? Mom and Summer might be worried.”

Rick pawed blindly at the covers until his hand found his lab coat and he fished out his watch and snapped it onto his wrist. His determination to prove her wrong evaporated when he realized they’d been missing from earth for more than twenty-four hours. *Holy shit.* Between his incarceration, the fooling around, and the long nap, and then the second round of sex, time had really gone on without them.

“Fine,” he grumbled, begrudgingly realizing that Jerry was still (probably) alive and had to be dealt with soon before Rick forever lost the chance to properly gloat. It wasn’t like he could taunt a corpse. And as much as the idea of holding Morty captive to pound her into the mattress was almost good enough to tempt him from his desire for petty revenge, the smell of a dead body was seriously hard to get out of a space ship – arguably it never really faded – and the last thing he wanted was to be ingesting decaying Jerry particles with his nose any time he stopped by that reclusive corner of space.

He rolled out of the bed and watched bemusedly while Morty scurried around and re-dressed, her cheeks a darker pink every time she glanced over her shoulder and caught his eyes on her. He dressed himself calmly, raiding the mini fridge for tiny bottles of booze, emptying the contents of three into his mouth and filling the spare space in his pockets with the rest of them.

Morty was watching Rick lace his shoes when the keycard-lock gears turned, the noise robotic and loud in the silence. Morty’s wide eyes met his when a moment later when the metal rod of the security lock slammed against the loop with a loud clanging thud.

“*Holy shit,*” she whispered urgently and Rick fought off a cackle when someone on the other side of the door shouted, “Wha – goddamnit not again, Sanchez!”

He gingerly placed the red flower crown back on Morty’s bed-rumpled head, spending too long straightening it since he found Morty’s increasingly anxious, almost-silent pleas to make a quick exit funny.

When she just about seemed ready to tear up, he shot a portal at the wall, swiped his phone off the table and followed Morty through the green film of particles.

A quick glance at the late afternoon sunlight filtering through the open garage door told Rick he might have to do some damage control considering he and Morty had been MIA for more than a day. Normally that would barely turn anyone’s head but Summer at least had a new investment in her sister after the whole Jerry’s-a-Sicko thing and Beth – always a little too codependent – likely needed someone around to take the place of her husband.

Sure enough, when he swung the garage door open, he’d barely called out half a greeting before Beth and Summer appeared in the kitchen doorway like they’d discovered their own portal technology, the tension in their faces not exactly well hidden. When Beth’s shaky hand pushed her
hair behind he ear, he wondered whether she’d spent more time worrying about Morty’s absence or his own.

“Dad!” Beth greeted, answering his questions with her excited tone before she cleared her throat and leveled her voice. “Is everything okay?” she asked, her eyes darting over his features with rabbit quickness. Rick gave her a reassuring nod and she sighed in relief, pressing into him for a light hug that he returned automatically.

“’Course. Hope you weren’t worried about us,” he half chided and Beth mustered up a faltering smile.

“I know you can handle yourself,” she brushed him off unconvincingly, obviously unwilling to upset him. “But you’re just in time, I was about to start dinner.”

Even though Morty was boring wide, sad, kicked-puppy eyes up at her mother and was clearly not wearing the same clothes she had left home in, Beth turned to the cupboard without so much as a glance in her direction. Rick smoothed a hand over Morty’s shoulders when she sagged at the unintentional but very informative snub.

When Rick had imagined Beth’s return to disregarding her youngest daughter, he hadn’t quite pictured it would come about so soon. For some unimaginable reason it annoyed him a little and he watched Morty track her mother’s distracted movements with her eyes while wearing a frown. But it was idiotic to be annoyed – it was what he’d expected, something he planned to turn to his advantage. After all, as the new head of the family, he would become an even more indispensable ally to Beth, and Morty - clearly pining for her mother’s affection - would find all the attention she could ever want from him. Probably more than she could handle considering how vivid a fantasy of bending her over the kitchen counter began playing out in the theater of his mind.

So he schooled his face back to neutral and shrugged under Summer’s watchful hazel gaze where she absorbed the exchange from the doorway with her arms crossed. When Rick caught her eye, she visibly swallowed her frustration and turned to her sister. “Morty, you look so cute,” she gushed, the tone somewhere between complimentary and resentful and not at all indicative of the swirl of self-righteous anger Rick had watched her smother behind her eyes. “Are those flowers?”

“You – you want to try them on?” Morty answered, shooting one last unreturned smile in her mother’s direction before visibly deflating. Summer swooped in with perfect timing and wrapped her up in a half-hug, guiding her out of the room.

“You know it,” Summer drolled, shooting one last glance at Rick before she disappeared around the door frame.

Beth waited until her daughters’ voices echoed from the foyer before she turned to Rick and admitted, “I thought that other you might have had something to do with… you know… Jerry,” Beth trailed off in half a whisper and Rick waved a dismissive hand.

“No, nothing like that,” he told her, watching the line of her spine relax. “Just some other bullshit. But it’s all taken care of, sweetie.”

“Okay,” Beth nodded, blinking at him with a frown before she pointedly wiped the expression off her face and busied herself gathering ingredients. “Okay,” she repeated, a little more brightly.

The girls filed back into the kitchen, the flower crown returned to Morty’s hair. Summer’s hand was still trying to comb Morty’s bedhead when she admitted, “It looks better on you. Red flowers in red hair; not the best combo.” They settled in at the counter - a strange but not entirely unexpected
change from their usual routine of disappearing upstairs until dinner was called. Beth smiled at him brightly when she asked him if he’d get the pan off the high shelf and Summer rolled her eyes amiably when Rick burped in the middle of his ‘you’re welcome.’ Everyone was still on edge about Jerry’s sudden absence and they were subconsciously finding comfort in one another or maybe, more specifically, they were finding comfort in Rick. Which was good. He wanted them to get comfortable with his support and turn to him with their problems. It would be annoying to listen to their useless complaints – jeezus, so fucking annoying – but it would make him even more irreplaceable than he already was. He’d own the house and everyone in it.

“Let me help, sweetie,” he insisted when Beth pulled out a cutting board and an onion and Beth looked surprised but happy for the company. For a few moments they worked peacefully besides each other, him dicing vegetables and her browning meat for a sauce and sipping at a glass of wine. Morty and Summer chatted between themselves contentedly while Rick’s ego inflated.

The three people Rick could tolerate were gathered around in the kitchen with him like some Norman fucking Rockwell painting. And it felt good. Rick felt good. It was shockingly unfamiliar territory for him.

“I was thinking, Beth,” he broke his own reverie, pulling a cup down from the cabinet and finding a bottle of vodka on his shelf and pouring a full glass. “What do you say I remodel your bedroom?”

Beth blinked at him, her hand stilling mid-stir. “Oh?” she asked as Summer and Morty shifted their attention at the sound of her voice. He could tell from the bright hazel eyes of Summer that she was already following his train of thought.

“I was just thinking, a big change might be nice, you know. New paint, new furniture: everything. Hell, give me an extra day and I can redo your bathroom too, take out that hideous tile.” Beth’s eyes went a little glassy and distant while she robotically raised the glass of wine to her lips. “Make it a whole new space, just for you.”

A wooden bang and a little ‘ouch’ pulled his attention from Beth and he watched Morty massage her knee where she’d banged it against the counter, her face pale and downturned. “I think that’s a great idea, Grandpa,” Summer spoke up leadingly when Beth’s silence went on a little too long. “Right Mom?”

Morty looked between her sister and her mother before she settled a frown on Rick. You chose this he reminded her in his mind and something of his thoughts must have slipped through because she dropped her pointed stare.

“You know, I never liked that yellow,” Beth slowly answered, something brightening in her eyes as she rose from her private thoughts. “And those tiles were dates when we moved in. A little change might be… nice,” she admitted, turning to him with a smile.

Rick hid a smirk behind his glass. “Let’s get started tomorrow. I can hook you up with an alien mattress that massages you to sleep,” he promised, filling a pot with water and gesturing a little too wildly with it once it was full. “Or, you know, ‘massages’ you to sleep if that’s more your speed,” he waggled his eyebrow and Beth barked out a surprised laugh that perfectly broke the tension.

“Dad!” she admonished adoringly.

“What? I want one,” Summer piped up.

“Shouldn’t we start with your room?” Beth asked, her eyebrows pinching together as she frowned at him. “You still sleep on that old cot like you’re just waiting for a chance to pack up and le-” Beth
froze, her eyes widened fractionally while staying glued to the pot. Summer stilled, her fingers pausing where they were weaving a braid into Morty’s hair and Morty – the only person who would look at him, her eyes swirling pools of black tar – begged him to say the right thing, the thing she’d never ask from him but that was always on her mother’s mind.

“That’s not a bad idea, sweetie,” Rick shrugged, leaning his hip against the counter and realizing the logic was sound. After all, a bigger bed might be useful in the future. “But I can hold out another couple days. Can’t I spoil my only daughter, first?”

Beth’s smile had a new shine to it when he nudged her elbow with his conspiratorially and handed her the cutting board covered in diced onions. “Well, if you insist,” she answered teasingly and the corners of Rick’s mouth tilted up in a grin.

“Oh, I really do,” he mused, his thoughts three galaxies away and a thousand dimensions over, where Jerry was breathing his last breaths.

Chapter End Notes

Almost there!
Beth didn’t drink nearly as much that night as she had in the weeks prior. She still got drunk, the family gathered around the dining room table while they studied alien magazines and color swatches, but she never hit the point where her words started slurring together which was a noticeable change. And Rick, sipping at his own glass of vodka and offering his expertise when requested, watched the strangely homey scene with relative contentedness.

A year and a half ago, if a stranger walked up to him and told him he’d be relatively content in a life with his family in a suburban, cookie-cutter, ranch-style house, he’d turn around and shoot the guy in the head. Rick didn’t do the whole domestic thing. It wasn’t in his chemical make-up.

But he had to wait for Morty to age up a bit before they could really take off. And it would be a good idea to ease Beth and Summer into a more intergalactic lifestyle. Why should they be trapped on Earth when they had his blood running through their veins? His daughter was capable of something better than a horse heart surgeon and Rick’s educated guess was that on Earth, Summer’s inability to put up with bullshit and her disrespect for authority would bar her from anything more complex than the assistant manager of a Starbucks even though Rick considered those some of her best qualities.

So he’d take care of them, lead them to a superior lifestyle more suited to their obvious intelligence – but he could introduce them gently. Give them the best chance to keep their sanity. And if that meant staying in their little suburban house for a few years, well, Rick had put up with a lot worse.

When Morty was finally shoed up to bed, she stared at him a little longingly while she ascended the staircase and Rick figured as far as the things he’d put up with in his life, this didn’t even make the list.

While Beth did the dishes (clearly in an attempt to put off going upstairs), Rick made up the couch for her, going so far as to fetch the spare pillow and comforter from the linen closet. When Beth wandered out of the kitchen and caught sight of what he’d done, she smiled a relieved, surprised half-grin before leaning into him for a prolonged hug goodnight. His arms lifted automatically and he hummed a sigh against her hair marveling at how the fabric-softener smell of her embrace had cemented itself in his head as the way Beth was supposed to smell, the sterile cleanliness of that those other stiff embraces no more than a faded memory.

He glanced up the stairs on his way to the garage, wondering vaguely whether Morty would come looking for him if he made her wait too long, but he had one last stop before he could really let himself enjoy her company.

Jerry.

It wasn’t that Rick wanted him dead. To admit that would be admitting that he cared about Jerry’s existence at all and Rick wasn’t willing to go so far. It was more like Jerrys were a particularly resilient form of cockroaches – a nuisance, a pest – something to be crushed underneath his foot. Wiping them out wasn’t so much murder as it was a public service.

So it wasn’t personal. Jerry was a liability no matter where he wound up. And Rick didn’t have the patience to keep an eye on him for the rest of his natural life so he had to shorten it a bit.
It was the only rational choice.

His first Jerry though – the one from τ-314 – Rick hadn’t exactly been thinking *rationally* when he’d removed him from the gene pool.

It was nearly twenty years ago but Rick still felt the curl of anger in his stomach when he thought of Beth stumbling into the kitchen, her eyes red-rimmed and her face gaunt and haunted; *aged* in a way he’d never seen on his teenage daughter. On his own face, sure. It took years to peel off that mask of horror once he discovered the unimaginable pointlessness of his own existence. Rick had only managed it by developing a bunch of substance abuse problems that dulled the hard edges of the multiverse but the evidence of it still clung to the wrinkles around the corners of his eyes and mouth.

Beth looked startled to see him in the kitchen as the last of the evening’s sunlight painted the room red. No doubt she would have hidden how upset she was from him if she’d known he was in the house; he suspected it in the moment and he knew it looking back. And she was right to be surprised. He didn’t spend a lot of time at home, especially since at seventeen she was a good deal older than he was when he’d set off on his own and he figured she’d value her independence. He still kept tabs on Beth’s well-being with a few security alerts set up to his surveillance system but mostly he let her keep her privacy. She was smart. She could take care of herself.

Or at least that’s what he’d thought.

He studied her over the rim of his coffee cup; her chest heaving, her fists clenched, the words spilling out of her mouth like she couldn’t keep them in. Maybe she was being vindictive. Or maybe she genuinely needed to get it off her chest and her blackhole-of-a-father was the only person she had left to confide in. After all, she had never been good at making friends.

“I’m pregnant.”

From the scrunch of her eyes he knew she had just spit acid into his face at the cost of burning up her own throat. The two words reverberated in Rick’s skull for thirty seconds and he took a long drag from his spiked coffee while he collected his thoughts.

She was waiting for him to say something, and at the time he’d thought she wanted a solution; a get out of jail free card, an Uno reverse, a ctrl-z undo.

Rick could help with that.

“I’ll take you to a clinic,” he said robotically, blinking away his daze. It shouldn’t have shocked him as much as it did. Sure, Beth was a post-pubescent girl and therefore *capable* of getting pregnant. And mistakes happen when *libidos* get involved. They’d never happened to him (and he was the living definition of a hot, slutty mess) but his parents had been awful enough to put him off the idea of accidentally procreating. He wasn’t sure how his fucked up relationship with her mother had mangled that very important message but pregnancy wasn’t a fatal diagnosis. “We’ll take care of it, sweetie. Someplace off-world, *leagues* better than the doctors here. You’ll be in and out, won’t feel a thing.”

“I’m keeping it.”

Of all the unimaginably stupid things she could have said he had *never* expected those words to follow her reluctant admission. He was shocked. Shocked and angry. And anger had always been easiest for Rick to bend to. “Don’t be an idiot.”

“I’m – I’m not.” Her voice kept shaking. “I’m keeping it and Jerry-”
“Jerry?” Rick had repeated poisonously. “It was Jerry that did this to you? That moron?!”

“Rick, don’t,” Beth said, her voice hard. “You don’t even know him.”

Of course he did. He looked into every idiot Beth brought home. Jerry was an average student (C average to be exact), he played the trombone in the marching band (poorly) and Beth had agreed to go to some dance with him (namely out of pity). “You’re a teenager Beth,” he intoned furiously, in case the thought hadn’t occurred to her.

His anger stirred her own and she bit out, “Oh please. Do you even know how old I am?” She sounded so much like her mother in that moment that Rick nearly lost himself in time.

“Seventeen,” he spat, determined to ignore the impending trip down memory lane. “Eighteen next May. Yeah that’s right, you don’t get to play the ‘Daddy doesn’t know me’ card. You think you’re ready for this Beth? At what point did I make raising a kid look easy?”

“I – I won’t be doing it alone. Jerry and I are going to get married after graduation.” He’d rolled his eyes and felt the way the expression rankled Beth.

“You are throwing away your life!”

“You don’t know anything about my life!”

He had tried – had really truly tried – to steady his breathing and lower his tone. But back then that sort of self-control had come so much less easily. “Come on Beth. You’re smarter than this. Think about it.”

“We – I already did.” Her voice shook and Rick watched tears slip down her cheeks. He hadn’t seen her cry since she was a child, not even at her mother’s funeral (though Rick hadn’t stuck around for much of that). “We were going to a clinic today. I was going to – I wasn’t going to keep it.”

“Then why’d you change your mind.” He gave up on moderating his tone. He was mad. Madder than he should have been. Things might have been different if he was comforting, reassuring; if he had spoken to her in a soft voice and wiped the tears off her cheeks. He knew that looking back but at the time he snapped, “Why the change of heart?” with just the right amount of a taunting edge that guaranteed she’d double down.

Hindsight was a bitch.

“The car broke down on the drive,” she answered, her voice cold and a little flat. “We spent hours on the side of the road. By the time the tow truck came, the clinic was closed and I’d – I’d changed my mind anyways.” Her tears dried up like they’d never been there in the first place and she was looking at him like he was a cretin, a worm, something disgusting and small and worthless. He hated her in that moment; hated Diane for convincing him they could do better than their own parents, hated the world for playing out its own unique brand of ‘Fuck You’ by ruining his daughter’s future. “If that isn’t the universe telling me to keep it, Rick, I don’t know what is.”

“The universe doesn’t give a shit about you, Beth!” It was the exact same thing he told himself every morning and apparently it was time she learned that lesson too.

But she scoffed. “You and it both.” Rick watched the resolve slip over her features and some niggle in the back of his brain wondered whether she’d be so steadfast in her decision if he’d just calm down but he couldn’t. He was raging against the cosmos’ ability to fuck him over. Even his daughter couldn’t escape his scourge. “I’m keeping it. I’ll marry Jerry. Then you can do what you’ve been waiting to do for ages and get out of here for good.”
She’d turned and disappeared into her room and left Rick to his own devices, his mind running a million miles a minute to find a solution, to fix the problem, to spare her the indignity of throwing her life away too early. In retrospect, he was depressingly aware that maybe a little kindness, a little reassurance, a little sympathy might have been what Beth needed most but Rick didn’t feel capable of anything even remotely gentle. He wanted to raze and destroy and ruin – the things he’d always been best at.

So he hunted up Jerry. His car had been towed to his parent’s driveway and the hood was still propped up. Rick was called to it like a beacon. It wasn’t like Jerry’s car was particularly old or rundown. In fact it was newer than the car Rick had in his garage back home. His parents had helped him pay for it as a birthday present; he vaguely remembered Beth mentioning that somewhat passive-aggressively when he’d handed off the keys to his ancient beater.

He ran his eyes over the engine, prying his fingers between the parts, looking for the malfunction that directly led to his daughter prematurely devoting herself to motherhood. Even the engine looked fresh; barely any soot built up between the parts – the thing seemed good as fucking new.

He was practically shoulder deep under the hood when he found the problem. The air intake filter was drenched. The motor had probably hydrolocked.

Rick frowned. It hadn’t rained that day and judging by the buildup of leaves in the gutter, it hadn’t for at least a week. Short of driving through a fucking river, there was no conceivable reason for the air intake to be clogged with water.

Rick wiped his hands on his lab coat as he paced around the car, inspecting it for further water damage. A thin layer of dust covered it wheels to roof – something a trek through a lake would have washed away - and the underside of the car still clung to some of the fine white powdered residue from the winter’s road salt.

What he did find during his circular inspection was a half uncurled hose dripping water on the side of the garage, a dark trail leading down the driveway and under the otherwise dry vehicle.

A wet engine. A dripping hose. A dry car. The realization hit Rick like a sledgehammer.

Jerry had sabotaged the trip to the clinic.

The guy had flooded his own engine with water so that the car would run like shit and eventually die in the middle of their drive to the doctor. It hadn’t been a message from the universe, only the attempt of some pathetic teenager to shackle Beth to himself irrevocably.

The in between memories were a little fuzzy because Rick had practically blacked-out with rage. But what he remembered very clearly - what he would never forget - was the look in Jerry’s eyes when Rick dragged him in front of the huge silica window in the stalled spaceship Rick had been meaning to fix up.

Wrestled out of bed in his boxers and a t-shirt that hung loosely off his teenage shoulders, Jerry had gaped in wonderment at the swirl of stars, the massive meteor rings of the nearest planet jutting into view spectacularly. He turned to Rick amazed, his mouth opening around some meaningless words but Rick would never know what he’d meant to say.

Rick shot a portal behind Jerry, a green swirl opening up into empty space on the other side of the glass. One shove and Rick was watching the blood vessels in Jerry’s eyes burst, his hands and feet swelling up as he flailed uselessly in search of oxygen that simply wasn’t there.
It was all over for Jerry fifteen seconds later. His bloated body had bounced off the glass and drifted to a dead halt less than a foot away from the glass, frozen forever, hovering just outside the window. Rick had tipped his flask at it in a cruel facsimile of a toast and portaled himself home without a speck of guilt.

Jerry was reported missing by his parents but when the police found out he had gotten the girl he’d taken to prom pregnant, they’d pegged him as a runaway and didn’t put too much work into their search. Not that they’d have found him, anyways.

On the rare occasion he and Beth occupied the same room, she’d cut him a look – a calculating, intelligent look – and Rick knew she had her suspicions, but she never voiced them out loud and certainly never spoke them to the police. And if he’d expected Beth to get an abortion once Jerry wouldn’t be around to help provide, he’d vastly underestimated the fact that stubbornness seemed to be a genetically inherited trait.

Beth had Summer all on her own. Rick was wasted and locked in an alien holding cell the day she went into labor so he’d never know if she’d tried to contact him but his instincts told him she hadn’t.

He put them both up in a little apartment – nicer than anything he’d rent for himself, bright with sunshine and within walking distance to most of Beth’s classes. He paid for her schooling too. He didn’t visit often and when he did, he didn’t linger, he’d stay just long enough to drop off cash and deflect the sneer that looked more like her mother’s every day. The arrangement seemed to suit them both just fine; all the way up until Beth squared her shoulders and told him she didn’t need his ‘hush money’ or his ‘bullshit pity’ anymore so he walked away and never looked back.

The whole genocide thing - that started at a bar. Don’t they all? Shortly after Beth’s big announcement, some other Rick walked into the same dive he’d stumbled into and he was drunk enough - and still pissed off enough - to ask questions he usually wouldn’t:

“Beth pregnant?”

“Yup.”

“Jerry’s car broke down on the way to the clinic?”

“Yours too, huh?”

“Did you know Jerry sabotaged the car?”

“What.”

“Yeah.”

“I’m gonna kill him.”

“That worked out pretty well for me.”

“Yeah right.”

“What, you want to see?”

In his drunken haze, he thought portaling some other Rick to his ship to show off Jerry’s perfectly preserved and frozen body was funny. The other Rick agreed. The other Rick portaled away for a second and came back dragging his own Jerry by the arm, this one dressed for school in a marching band jacket. One more portal and there were two Jerries outside the window and two Ricks laughing
hysterically inside the ship.

It had never been Rick’s intention. He didn’t seek anyone out; he never coerced or convinced or even suggested. He’d simply tell any other Rick he met on his travels what he had learned: that if Beth had kept her child thanks to some *epiphany*, her divine message from the universe had been manufactured by a teenage boy who knew Beth was the best he’d ever get and who figured out a way to sink his claws into her for good.

Some of them didn’t care but a lot of them did – particularly Tau dimension Ricks; they had a reputation for being unstable and always seemed the most gleeful once their own Jerries joined the slowly thickening crowd. Despite being unanimously absent from their daughters’ lives in most dimensions, Ricks were a possessive sort. And Rick’s daughter was supposed to have more options than marrying some ignoramus straight out of high school and settling down with a kid.

So the collection of Jerry-bodies grew, though none of them gave Rick the same satisfaction as the one floating front and center, the one frozen forever clutching at his throat while his oversize t-shirt hovered around his body like a parachute, three inches of frozen stomach skin visible below the hem.

The last Jerry had been added to his collection nearly sixteen years ago. Before whispers of Morty started spreading and Jerry’s *true* potential became clear.

Ricks were unanimously not ones for regret but the Council took it upon themselves to punish the Rick who unintentionally deprived them of more precious human shields. But Rick had seen the failures of the Citadel marching a mile away and didn’t mind the ostracism. Especially not when he could look upon his contribution to the multiverse – the hundreds of Jerries frozen motionless in space – and know that he had truly done something *different*.

And now it was time to add one more.

His worktable was covered in familiar clutter and the novelty that everything was still *exactly* where he’d last left it wasn’t lost on Rick. He glanced around the garage and started tallying the things he’d need to do with Jerry officially out of the picture. He’d have to re-automate the lawnmower so Morty wouldn’t get pegged with the chore again. He had to set an alarm to wake up in time to beat Jacob to the Shoney’s tomorrow morning. And he might program his Rick-bot to increase the weekly target income selling weed to the neighborhood. He needed to make sure the remaining Smith family wasn’t just *okay* without Jerry; they were *better off*. Luckily Jerry did a lot of that work for him by being an unbearable pain in the ass and a bottomless pit of resources but Rick figured it wouldn’t hurt to oversell the idea.

He spun the dial on his portal gun to the hanger of his stalled ship and tapped his fingers along the edge of the counter.

Jerry was a fucking liability. He had a *remarkable* talent for winding up in the wrong situation and saying the wrong things, and when one of those things might be mentioning his youngest daughter – who was widely believed to be about as rare as a fucking unicorn - Rick couldn’t risk it. And killing Jerry, giving him that one good shove out into the vacuum of space, was the *only* way to guarantee he wouldn’t wind up cropping up unexpectedly somewhere down the road.

Rick reached for his flask and sipped from it on autopilot, the sting of slightly-metallic vodka not nearly strong enough to drown out the pool of tension burning low in his guts.

He glaring at his own tapping fingers before he dug around in one of his drawers and pulled out a plastic box filled with smaller components. It was quick work to fashion a thin gold chain, delicate looking but with a tensile strength that rivaled titanium, and he eyeballed the length, testing it once
around his own neck to see where it would hang.

Birthing a few miniature stars and suspending them in a small, clear, tear-shaped pendant was significantly more challenging but even Rick could appreciate the final product, the delicate ornament emitting just the faintest warm glow against the palm of his hand. Ric’s topaz looked like a fucking rhinestone in comparison to Rick’s newest feat of science and he pocketed the necklace with a certain amount of smugness.

With that chore done, Rick dragged his eyes over his worktable, wracking his brain for any other menial tasks he’d been putting off but only the one came to mind.

He ran his hand over his hair and sighed in resignation before he dug up the mostly full bottle of liquor from Dorian 5. It took three sips for the room to start spinning. He stumbled into the stool, almost overturning it before he managed to balance the upper half of his body enough to sit down. The corkboard above his workbench was pitching and rolling like a water bed and he was surprised when he looked down to find his hands cradling the memory-wiper.

He stretched across the workbench for a screwdriver and let his fingers do the work with almost no input from his brain.

When the side panel was mostly screwed back in place, he was already lilting heavily to the side, the ground rising up to meet him as he overbalanced off the stool, so he shot a portal at the slab of cement likely to catch his fall and his shoulder landed heavily on metal grating.

“Rick!” a dry, desperate voice shook him out of his daze as he struggled to turn over and brace his hands against steel. *Man* those Dorian 5-ers didn’t fuck around. He could barely feel the places where the cold grates dug into the palms of his hands. “Are you here to rescue me and take me home? Rick?!”

With great difficulty and a little help, Rick clambered to his very unsteady feet. Then he realized the person reluctantly tugging on his arm to help him up was Jerry, the man of the hour, and Rick shrugged off his hands.

“What, Jerry no,” Rick might have slurred more if he weren’t putting so much effort into the words. His metabolism was already making quick work of the alcohol – the liquor registered to his nanobots strong enough to be poison – and his biochemical readout beeped frantically in the corner of his vision, the intense, can’t-see-straight hammered slipping away to a hard, reliable drunk as his internal mechanics worked quickly to keep him alive. Rick burped and practically watched his toxins decrease with the expulsion.

“Where are we?” Jerry asked, his lips chapped and his face haggard, two days of stubble dusting his cheeks. Jerry-bot was crumpled against the wall and from the looks of it, Jerry had tried his best to take his aggression out on the unsuspecting robot; its clothes were torn and its hair messy. “You know what, I don’t care. I’ve been here for days and I just want to go home,” Jerry whined and Rick dragged the back of his wrist over his wet bottom lip.

It certainly *smelled* like Jerry had been there for days. So much for not needing to air the place out. Rick fought off the instinct to gag – harder to accomplish when some intelligent part of his body wanted nothing more than to expel the poison he’d ingested – but he was old hat at keeping down liquor.

“Jer – Jerry, come o-ooough-n, come here,” Rick demanded, maneuvering the smaller man in front of him and boxing him in with a grip on both his shoulders.
Jerry had to work to moisten his tongue enough to rasp, “Rick what’s going on,” and even through the fog of inebriation, Rick caught the moment Jerry turned from hopeful to shrewd.

“Jerry, I – I think it’s time we went our separate ways.” Jerry dug his hands into Rick’s breast pocket and Rick was too slow to slap him away. Rick watched him tip his own flask to his dry lips and cough at the searing flush of alcohol.

It wouldn’t do anything to help his dehydration but it wet his throat enough to ease his words. “What?” Jerry asked idiotically and Rick sighed.

“I – I – It’s just no-ooolong-t working out.”

Jerry wobbled on his feet and cantered over, planting himself heavily on the ground, wide brown eyes boring up at Rick pleading and confused. “Rick, are you – it sounds like you’re breaking up with me?”

“There’s – listen Jerry –” Rick knelt down and braced an arm on Jerry’s shoulder. “I’m gonna shoot this thing straight: I need you out of the picture.”

“Wait, what?” Jerry asked faintly, shoving Rick’s arm off his shoulder weakly.

“So I’m gonna –uuuurp- I’m gonna take the family, Jerry.”

“Rick-” Jerry started, anger and fear rising in his voice while he tried to leverage himself up. Rick shoved him back with a solid, easy push.

“No – shhh sshh sshhhh, it’s already happened, Jer. They –uuuurp- they think you’ve been drugging and raping Morty-!” Rick’s voice tilted up into an unintentional fit of maniacal laughter. He leaned over, bracing himself against his knee until his cackling died down.

“W - why!? Why would they think that?!” Jerry demanded, his eyes (so familiar in shape and shade) wide with horror.

“Be-eewuhh-cause I made it look like you were.” Rick snatched the flask out of Jerry’s hand and wiped the lip of it off on his lab coat before he took an unnecessary swig.

“But I’m not!” Jerry rasped and Rick rolled his eyes again.

“I know that.”

“But why? Why would you do that, Rick?” Rick could see in Jerry’s eyes that if he weren’t half dead from dehydration and weak from lack of food, he’d be trying to throw a punch. Rick itched for him to try anyways – he wanted to know what Jerry’s cheekbone felt like when it cracked under his knuckles – he wanted to spill blood and leave bruises and rip the man apart with his teeth.

He knew something of his thoughts must have flickered across his face when Jerry tried to lean away and Rick straightened his back to leer down at the smaller man. “Because I hate you, Jerry. Honestly and deeply.” Those brown eyes – Morty’s brown eyes – stared back at him with absolute terror and it stilled the fists he longed to raise. “But ugh - I guess I can’t say that anymore, can I? Cause without you I wouldn’t have my Morty.”

“Morty?” Jerry breathed, his brow furrowing in confusion.

“Yeah, Morty. She’s – she’s my perfect little partner in crime. A real –uuuurp- real treasure.” Ugh, he must be drunk because he wasn’t usually that gushy. “Isn’t it good to know your existence wasn’t
a total waste?"

“Are you going to kill me?” Jerry asked faintly and it was her eyes looking up at him like he was the most awful monster in all the galaxy and it hurt more than he’d thought it would.

Rick sighed and leaned back, scrubbing a hand over his face and talking into his palm. “Oh Jer, I really wish I could.” He raked his fingers through his hair and centered himself in the wrinkles around Jerry’s eyes and the inept tilt of his mouth and all the other obvious parts of him that didn’t look anything at all like Morty. “And you know, I can kill you. I mean I have. Believe me, I have before. But she’s making me soft, Jerry.” He admitted it on a groan, a new form of self-hatred making him fist his hand in his hair.

“Who is?” Jerry asked dumbly and Rick barely resisted the urge to smack him.

“Morty!” he practically shouted, his voice echoing around the metal hull. “She made me promise! But what the fuck is a promise, right?” Rick rambled mostly to himself.

“You shouldn’t break your promises,” Jerry whimpered and Rick shoved his shoulder hard until he was practically lying supine across the floor, Rick frowning down at him with derision.

“I – If I kill you – I mean Morty wooooo-uldn’t even have to know...”

“Rick…” Jerry whined and Rick crawled over him to pin him with his hips.

“And it would be so much easier to just kill you,” Rick continued, his fists clenching above Jerry’s face the way he longed to clench them around his neck.

Jerry trembled below him. “I mean if it matters what I think-”

“It doesn’t, Jerry. It really doesn’t.” Rick sighed and let his arms hang limply at his sides. “Ugh, making me so soft,” he grumbled while he pulled the memory-wiper from his pocket and pointed it at Jerry’s cowering face. “Just – just knooouug-w that you owe Morty. You owe her big time.”

Rick pulled the trigger and watched the flashbulb burst reflect off Jerry’s so-familiar brown eyes. They dimmed as the light receded, his face falling lax in the heavy silence following the electric charge. Memory goo leaked from the clear vial in a steady stream, staining Jerry’s already soiled shirt and disappearing through the grates in the floor.

Rick swayed in place and kneaded his temples before flopping off of Jerry and bracing his forearms on his bent knees. He passively watched a thin line of drool slip out the corner of Jerry’s mouth and dangle in the recycled air below his turned cheek.

“Jerry,” Rick said sternly, his voice sharp in the silence. The other man didn’t so much as flutter an eyelid. “Jerry,” he repeated again louder, but Jerry didn’t even twitch. Rick nudged Jerry’s hip hard with his foot – more of a kick really – but the comatose man remained unresponsive. “Guess that worked,” he hummed to himself, draining the last of his flask. He wasn’t nearly as drunk as he should be. But then again, he was drunk enough to uphold a promise instead of doing the smart thing and killing the stupid asshole so his decision making skills were definitely impaired.

Rick was peripherally aware that it would probably be wise to double check; to perform a more expansive examination before he sent Jerry off into the universe. But Rick felt like he’d already wasted too much of his time with Jerry today and if he passed the kick test, he had to be just about brain-dead. And really, the hangar smelled foul with Jerry’s excrement and body odor and it was time to fucking bounce.
He spun the dial of his portal gun to Anaubria Claxon XIV and shot a spiral of green below Jerry’s back, the middle-aged man slipping silently through the film of green particles and disappearing from Rick and Morty’s life for good.

With Jerry gone, Rick dragged himself to his feet and paced to the door. He turned back and shot another quick portal to his bunker under the crumpled Jerry-bot, sending him home. Better to keep the machine, just in case. It would really suck to have to spend more time and money on replacing it should anything stray too far off plan. Then he turned and palmed the hangar door open, closing it as quickly behind him as he could to keep the smell out of the rest of the ship. It wasn’t much use – the gangway already carried a faint eu-de-Jerry; the nature of recycled and recirculated air. The smell wasn’t as noxious though, so Rick was grateful for small victories.

Anaubria would be good to Jerry. It was a planet of large, intelligent creatures that viewed most smaller lifeforms with a love and devotion not too dissimilar from how humans viewed cats and dogs. And since Rick had erased everything of Jerry’s life short of the first year or so, the idiot had been reduced to a non-threat in just about the only way Rick could work out on short notice without ending the man’s life.

So there, Morty, he taunted uselessly in his head. Fucking safe as can be.

Without meaning to, Rick found that his legs had walked him to the massive silica glass window overlooking the Jerry graveyard and Rick frowned, his unhappy reflection glinting back at him superimposed over the asteroid belt of bodies.

He swayed and caught himself against the glass, his eyes raking over the frozen teenager nearest to the ship. He’d spent a lot of time in front of this window and while the emotions the sight inspired varied, he never really considered that somewhere inside that frozen body was the raw material that might have one day helped create a Morty if Rick had allowed Jerry to live past seventeen.

Rick pulled a small boxy device from his pocket and a screwdriver from another, fiddling with the two until the ridged side panel lifted and he could tamper with the series of tubes and wires inside.

For a long time, the old, motionless ship was the closest thing Rick had to safe harbor; the closest thing Rick had to a home if he really wanted to be a little sentimental about it. But if Morty saw what was on the other side of the window – Rick cut his eyes up to the too familiar view, to the drifting school books and gym bags and marching band hats – she’d never forgive him. Or maybe she would - fuck knows no one had ever taught her to value herself enough to hold a grudge - but she’d never look at him with that swirling pit of trust again that sucked him in and convinced him to do so many stupid things.

Besides, it was too much work to get the smell of Jerry’s shit out of the vents.

Once he’d made the last few adjustment to the miniature evaporation cube in his hand, he snapped the panel back into place and opened up a portal, chucking it through in an underhanded toss.

He got one good look at the bomb drifting lazily past his Jerry’s exposed navel before Rick shot a portal below his own feet and landed lightly on the solar system rug in Morty’s bedroom, a faintly echoing bang barely thrumming through the portal before it closed.

She was mostly asleep but stirred at the light touch of his hand on her shoulder. “You smell like space,” she grumbled as she turned, blinking up at him with eyes growing brighter by the second. The sight was too endearing, that no-longer-dead thing latched around his heart purring at the way her teal painted fingernails raked through her messy bangs to comb them flat. Her head was titled, waiting for his instruction and after he did nothing more than stare at her a little blearily for more than
a moment, she turned down her comforter in a shy, obvious invitation. He resisted the temptation, his brain stuttering over a previous half-formed plan.

“Come – come on Mo-ouuuht-ty,” he urged, pulling her up by the arm and shooting another portal at her wall. She stumbled through it, her hand latching onto his lab coat as she caught up to his speed just in time to walk side-by-side with him through the green swirl.

“Oh,” she breathed stepping out with bare feet onto the field of bioluminescent flowers on Cartus Prime. As the portal irised out of existence behind them, she craned her neck around to take in the softly glowing blues and purples and pinks before she tilted her neck back and studied the crystal clear stretch of stars above their heads. “Huh,” she whispered marvelingly to herself and Rick cut her a quizzical look.

“What?” he asked, trailing his hand over her shoulder to lay his palm over the back of her neck.

“I – I thought I’d dreamt this place up,” she admitted quietly before she turned to flash him with a smile as brilliant as her eyes.

“Big surprise, Morty, you fell asleep on me last time,” he taunted and when she pouted he was quick to exaggerate his teasing tone when he told her, “Sit. And try not to conk out this time, okay?”

He was through a portal before her startled call hit his ears but he was only gone half a second, long enough to swipe a dish and some silverware off an intergalactic diner’s line counter before anyone even saw him and sidestepping back onto Cartus Prime.

She gawked when he returned with a plate in hand.

“Got you something, Morty,” he smirked, folding his legs underneath himself while he sank to the ground, softly lit by the gentle glow of the surrounding flowers. “It’s way better fresh.”

He held the plate under her nose and laughed outright when she closed her eyes to drink in the smell of the Andromeda Galaxy turnover she’d tasted in rehydrated form just a few days prior. “Oh wow,” she whispered, fingers quick enough to pick a berry off the plate before he could yank it away. When she plopped it in her mouth, her face transformed into a wickedly familiar expression of bliss. “Oh wow.” She practically melted to the ground next to him, her arm just barely brushing his.

“Told you,” he chuckled, cutting a piece and holding it up for her to bite. She groaned at the taste and sank back into the flowers, staring around a little dazedly as she chewed.

“Something else too,” he grunted, depositing the plate in her lap and fishing the thin gold chain and pendant from his pocket. Before she’d properly balanced the dish on her knees to steal another bite, he’d snuck a hand under her hair and linked the loose ends of the necklace together. They bonded together seamlessly and Rick let the clear gem drop against the exposed skin of her sternum.

“Wha-” Morty exhaled, her hand jumping to her throat to study the softly glowing cluster of lights. “What’s this?” she asked, her voice breathy with wonder.

“M-eeeeugh–iniature stars, Morty,” he answered, more than pleased when her head snapped up, her mouth agape.

“R – real stars?” she gasped, her fingers turning the pendant so she could better see the space between the small orbs of light. Amongst the cool phosphorescent lights of the flowers, it looked like Morty’s heart was radiating a soft, warm glow, the smooth skin of her throat catching the light in distractingly appealing patterns.
“Mmhmm,” Rick hummed, entirely too pleased with the awe sparkling in her eyes. “Now what’s the nicest thing you own, Morty?”

Morty squinted at him, something almost shrewd passing behind her eyes. “What’s the occasion, Rick?”

He raised half his unibrow at her and she dropped her eyes to study the trapped stars again. Her eyelashes were long and thick where they brushed against her cheekbones and the sight was oddly sweet, the golden glow of her pendant lighting up her face from below. “You’re a good little sidekick, Morty,” he relented, his belly stirring with too much affection so he grabbed the plate back from her and shoveled a bite into his mouth to shut himself up.

But Morty’s blush and the tentative way she looked up at him made him think the praise was worth it. “Oh - oh yeah?” she breathed out on a pleased little laugh, dropping her necklace to lean back and brace herself on her arms.

“Yeah, Morty.” He spooned another bite into her mouth and was entirely too entranced by the way she closed her eyes and moaned once the flavor hit her tongue. She did a happy little shimmy, her knees bouncing jovially while she hummed her approval. Rick felt his face soften and – with no one else to see it on the planet but Morty – gave into the impulse to smile genuinely. “And it’s good – it’s good you chose to come back here with me, Morty.” She tilted her head and for how insane the last week had been; for how much had changed in her home life and her understanding of the multiverse and the relationship between the two of them, she was looking at him just like she always had – like she couldn’t wait to hear the next words out of his mouth and be dragged along on the next adventure. “I mean I wasn’t going to let you stay with those Ric-bitches but I’m glad you didn’t make me put in too much extra work.”

Her eyes narrowed into smart little slits and he wanted to lick the smile curving up her lips off her mouth so he leaned in and did. When he pressed his tongue between her teeth, he swallowed her surprised little laugh.

“I-” she interrupted herself to lay a lingering kiss to the corner of his grinning mouth. “I’m your Morty,” she said quite simply and Rick’s eyelids dropped to half-mast when she swiped up a smear of the alien fruit off the plate with her finger and licked it off with her small, pink tongue. Rick was entranced by the motion and coated his own fingers in the sweet syrup, running them over her lips.

“We’re gonna go on adventures Morty,” he told her, his breath starting to come in ragged pants when her tongue flicked over the calloused pads of his fingers, sending heat from the point of contact all the way to the tips of his toes. “We’re gonna go all over the multiverse and – and really fucking tear it a new asshole, Morty.” He leaned in to lick the last of the syrup that still clung to her lips, his fingers knotting in the hair at the base of her skull. “And no one’s gonna get in our way. It’ll just be the two of us. Rick and Morty forever.”

Her eyes were still closed when he leaned back to bask in her serenity. “Sounds good, Rick,” she answered lightly, like he hadn’t specifically molded the multiverse to make all that possible and there was no particular reason to celebrate those facts. His eyes narrowed.

“And once we finish eating this, I’m gonna fuck you into the ground, Morty,” he promised and felt a little thrill when that got her attention, her eyes popping wide and her mouth dropping open. He scooped up a flaky corner of the turnover pressed it into her gaping mouth. “I’m gonna really give it to you, Morty. So load up on nutrients while you can cause I went easy on you earlier.”

“Oh shit,” she half-whimpered/half-laughed, her hand darting up to cover her lips as she struggled to chew and swallow what he’d fed her while he watched her heartbeat monitor accelerate in the
peripheral of his vision.

“*Oh shit*’ is right, baby,” he promised, shoving the last bite into his own mouth and making her clean his fingers with her tongue. “I told you I’d fuck you on every planet, in every system, Morty. Let’s start now.”

“Oh jeez,” she groaned and he laughed gruffly, tackling her into the softly glowing flowers and dark grass, a little surprised when she put some of the maneuvers he’d taught her the last time they’d wrestled to use, squirming out from under him and nearly capturing him in a headlock before he broke her hold and turned her over.

She was laughing by the time he managed to pin her with his superior weight and skill, her hair tussled and littered with dimming flower petals and dark blades of grass. He stilled, his heart uncomfortably full and his stomach bizarrely heavy and for one wild moment he was sure he’d completely lost his mind but then Morty’s smile softened into something so delicate he was sure it would wilt in full sunlight.

“Love you, Rick,” she said without prompting, her voice as light and even as if she’d commented on the weather. And her face - open and trusting and always screaming her every thought like a teleprompter – gave her away, gave it *all* away: that she didn’t say those words to hear them back, to be validated, to be coddled or worshiped or treated better. She said them because she thought them, because she *felt* them, and that was reason enough for Morty. That had always been reason enough for Morty.

The walls of the big empty pit inside of Rick crumbled, widening the hole but filling the chasm with rubble, the deep shadowed placed crowding up with rocks and soil, just the faintest touch of light warming the bottom for the first time in decades. A calm wind rustled the foliage cocooning them in a matted nest, the plants whispering as they swayed together, but all Rick could hear were Morty’s words, echoing down the hill and bouncing off the stars, vibrating his bones to dust. He caught up one of her hands and linked their fingers, blowing air out his nose like a scoff but the sound was much less harsh than he’d meant it to be. He leaned up on his elbow and something must have passed across his face because she grinned at him with a radiance so bright it nearly burned.

“*Good,*” Rick said gently, combing her rumpled bangs away from her forehead and watching the stars reflected in her eyes shine.

Chapter End Notes

There you have it: nearly 150,000 words and, *apparently,* 650 hours of writing and editing. Phew.

I've got a half-started, significantly shorter sequel bouncing around between my head and the keyboard so this might not be the end of τ-314 Rick and U-694 Morty but I've gotta take a little break between projects - stare at something that *isn’t* my computer for a little bit.

Thank you so much for reading, for sticking with this long-ass story, for all the comments and kudos and hits. It's been a journey and if you made it this far, I'm so very grateful for the time you invested.

Lots of love, whyamilike_this =^.■■■ ^=
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