### Tuesday

**by KathSilver**

#### Summary

Every group of people has their traditions. Sometimes they're passed down through family, through culture, or even through religion. And sometimes they're created by 8 year old boys who have a bit too much time on their hands.

Or: 16 years. 8 boys. 5 Christmases. 2 idiots in love.

#### Notes

Thank you for clicking that link, I'm awful at summaries. I have no real idea how to describe this story honestly... it just sort of happened because I forgot to sign up for the TMR Secret Santa and wanted to write a Christmas present for the discord. So, guys, Merry Christmas (or whichever holiday you celebrate) and thank you so much for everything you've given me.
over the past months. You're all amazing people and I am so happy to call you my friends.

Enjoy!

Update: There is now a playlist for this fic on Spotify! Blame Micky.
https://open.spotify.com/user/125571946/playlist/6UaPq92OsFhmVp114NU2d7?
si=J1N2HSAfRReddb7DBBGGmA

See the end of the work for more notes

Part I

Christmas, 8 years old

Winter was his favorite.

Whenever his parents would take him into the city Thomas would stare in openmouthed joy at the way all of the lights looked in the snow, the way the chill in the air added a layer to the lives they lived already.

He loved the colors that coats and scarves brought to everyone, how cheeks would darken just from stepping outside, how everything sped up and slowed down at the same time when it was cold out.

Winter brought more snow days, which were awesome, but so was the snow in general. Ever since Thomas could remember he’d decided that one day he’d go on a trip to every place he could during the winter to see the way snow made it look.

His mom helped him find new places to add to his ever-growing list whenever she had free time.

“Hi mom! Home from school!” Thomas shouted. He dropped off his book bag and toed off his shoes near the door before he sprinted upstairs to his room and booted up his computer.

Another added benefit of wintertime was that his parents didn’t yell at him for spending all of his free time playing World of Warcraft with his friends, as long as his homework was done. So, Thomas did his homework during lunchtime like any sensible kid and spent all of his home time battling the Alliance with his Guildmates and best friends.

{Guild Message} Welcome to the Glade!

[Greenie has logged on]

[Magneato]: Tom did you see?

[Greenie]: See what?

[Griffon]: told ya
Thomas leapt from his computer chair and left it spinning with how quick he ran to the window. Minho was right, there were trucks at the house next door. Even better was that there were kids. Thomas made a snap decision and ran back to his computer to see the backlog of messages he’d missed.

[Magneato]: Thomas?
[Magneato]: dude
[Frypan]: did anyone do the history homework yet
[Zorro]: not now fry
[Magneato]: this is not the time for homework!
[Magneato]: TOM COME BACK WHERE DID U GOOOOO
[Legoman]: he’s prolly lookin idiot
[Magneato]: o right
[Greenie]: guys theres people moving next door!!!
[Griffon]: thanks captain obvious
[Greenie]: no I mean like theres kids! Boy looks our age and a girl too
[Zorro]: eeeewwwwwww
[Frypan]: gross
[BumbleBee]: cool!
[Legoman]: ugh a girl?
[Griffon]: oh no don’t you go over there
[Magneato]: who cares about the girl does the boy look dumb or nah
[Greenie]: im going over to say hi
[Griffon]: NO U CANT
[BumbleBee]: ask if they play!
[Magneato]: Thomas the raid is in 10 min what r u doing
[Greenie has logged off]
Thomas was downstairs with his shoes on before the game even finished exiting. He spared only the exact amount of time it took him to put on his nice blue coat and red scarf, the ones his mom said made him stand out, cause he wanted to make a good impression.

He sprinted out the front door but was careful not to slam it; the excitement of a new friend was almost too much to contain.

There were two kids playing out front while their parents directed the moving people, who Thomas dodged easily, and when Thomas finally bounded through the snow to where they were making snow angels, he was struck dumb.

They were both so pretty. Their hair was nearly white and so was their skin, except for where the icy air turned their cheeks and noses a bright pink that made them glow. Their eyes were warm and brown like hot chocolate, even though they looked at him with confusion and a little bit of fear.

Thomas knew he should say something, introduce himself, but the two kids in front of him were like if you turned winter into people and he wasn’t prepared for that.

“Uh…” Thomas said eventually, so that he was saying something. It was enough to snap him out of his daze. “Hi! I’m Thomas! I live next door!”

The little girl hid a bit behind her big brother, but Thomas could tell she was curious, and the fear in her eyes started to go away. Her brother tilted his head but held out his hand to introduce himself like Thomas should have done.

“I’m Newt, and this is my sister Sonya,” he said with a high voice that sounded like nothing Thomas had ever heard before. It was like music, and Thomas started to think that these weren’t kids and were instead some kind of Christmas magic.

“Are you elves?” Thomas whispered frantically. He had to know, he had to. Gally and Alby said there was no such thing as magic, but the pretty boy in front of him was like all Thomas’s favorite things and Gally lied about everything anyway.

Even his laugh sounded like music, and when Sonya giggled her whole face lit up like the Sun.

“No, silly!” Sonya said, voice high and squeaky but just the same as Newt’s. “We’re people!”

Thomas shook his head in disbelief, but he also kind of wanted to make them laugh again. “But you’re both so pretty! And you are like sunshine,” Thomas directed at little Sonya, who giggled again. Newt had suddenly gone a lot pinker, he should wear a thicker coat, but Thomas figured he could mention that later. “And you sound like music! You’ve gotta be from somewhere magic!”

“London,” Newt pushed out, still very very pink, “We’re from London. No magic there just lots of rain.”

“Huh, well. I’m from New York, they don’t make people like you here. Wish they would. Let me be the first to say welcome!”

Newt bit his lip a little bit and turned shy, “You’re not gonna make fun of my name?”

“No,” Thomas said. “Lizards are cool!”

“A newt is a salamander! Don’t you know anything?” Sonya giggled at him again, and Thomas
couldn’t help but poke at her to make her do it again.

“Sorry Sunny! Guess I’m just not as bright as you are!”

“It’s Sonya,” she said, not getting the joke, but appearing delighted nonetheless.

“Of course it is, Sunny.” Thomas nodded dutifully.

She giggled again. Thomas had no idea if little girls normally giggled this much, but it was kind of cute.

“D’you want to make snow angels with us?” Newt asked quietly.

“Sure, quick question though. Do you play World of Warcraft?” Thomas asked solemnly.

Immediately Newt looked insecure, like if he gave the wrong answer Thomas wouldn’t want to be his friend anymore. “What’s that?”

Thomas looked at him in horror, because WoW was the best thing ever and Newt was seriously missing out. “Don’t worry; first we make snow angels, and then I’m going to change your life.”

When Newt smiled like that, he looked like Sun, too.

Thomas stared at the guild chat nervously. Minho and the others were still deciding whether or not to let Newt join. They hadn’t met him yet, because he wasn’t going to start school until after Christmas, and all they knew was that Thomas said he was the best thing ever.

[Zorro]: but hes a noob

[Legoman]: u only started playin last month

[Greenie]: come on guys he’s really great u’ll see

[Frypan]: if Thomas adopted him we r stuck w him anyway

[Magneato]: tru

[Griffon]: y do we let him adopt ppl. look what we got last time

[BumbleBee]: slim it gally im awesome

[Zorro]: what toon he make tom?

[Greenie]: troll priest

[Magneato]: he’s gonna b healz? WHY DIDN’T U SAY SO EARLIER

[Magneato]: inv sent

[Greenie]: finally

{LizardKing has joined The Maze Runners}
[Guild Message: Welcome to the Glade!]

[LizardKing]: whats the glade?

[Magneato]: idk it’s the default I cant figure out how to change it

[LizardKing]: oh. hi!

[Greenie]: i thought a newt was a salamander

[LizardKing]: that you tommy?

[LizardKing]: sonya picked it

[Griffon]: u named urself after a lizard

[BumbleBee]: no hes the lizard KING cant u read

[BumbleBee]: besides u got ur name from harry potter

[Griffon]: slim it ben!!!

[Greenie]: ha yeah its me!

[Greenie]: im omw to where you are now

[LizardKing]: I have no idea what im doing

[Magneato]: is no1 gonna mention the tommy thing

[Magneato]: no1 at all

[Legoman]: nope

[Frypan]: u call me fry u cant judge

[Zorro]: r we gonna play or what

[Legoman]: gotta train new guy

[Zorro]: kk, meet u there

They played for hours every day, until one by one their parents dragged them off to bed. They worked hard to teach Newt the game and get him to where he could heal them all as quickly as they died; he and Thomas worked well together, Newt healing everyone while Thomas kept mobs off him with his beasts and bow.

Finally Christmas vacation started, and it brought snow! There had to be at least like three whole feet of it, and he and Newt spent a whole day making a good pathway between their backyards so they could still meet up. They’d taken to being at each other’s houses every day and Thomas could not believe his luck at finally having a friend live right next door to him, like Frypan and Zart or Minho.
and Alby.

He and Newt shared everything, all about Newt’s life in London and how his step-dad got a job in New York so they moved; Thomas showed Newt his travel book and all the places he wanted to go, as well as the money bank where Thomas saved every bit of money his Gramma had ever given him so that he could go and see the Northern Lights someday. He wanted to go more places than that, of course, but you had to start somewhere!

“But what if they don’t like me?” Newt worried.

The guild had planned a giant snowball fight for that afternoon and it would be Newt’s first-time meeting all of them. But Thomas wasn’t worried, they all got along great in game as long as Zart wasn’t spamming aggro and making it impossible for Newt to keep up. Then everyone got frustrated with each other.

“Don’t be silly! I like you, so they have no choice,” Thomas explained.

“If you’re sure…”

“Trust me! It’s gonna be great! They’ll like you, we’ll play until we can’t feel our toes, Mom will make hot chocolate for us all, and then tonight we can take you through the next higher area! And we get to do this for a whole week! This is gonna be the best Christmas ever.”

Newt’s smile looked like he agreed.

Part II

Christmas, 12 years old

“We leave in the morning,” Thomas told Newt quietly. They were sitting in the igloo they’d only finished the week before; at that point it was tradition, they had made it every year since Newt had moved next door, and now Thomas was the one moving away.

His dad had gotten a job in California, which was about as far away from winter as you could get. They’d been preparing for the move for months now and were originally going to wait until after Christmas, but something came up with his dad’s new job and so Thomas had to leave his home a whole week earlier than planned.

Moving on Christmas.

Great.

“Moving isn’t so bad, y’know?” Newt said, obviously trying to cheer him up. It was the tactic he’d chosen from the very beginning—whenever Thomas got angry or sad about the move, Newt would
do his level best to calm him down. They were best friends, it didn’t matter that he’d known Minho for his whole life or that the guild had been in the same class together since kindergarten. Ever since that first day Thomas had seen Newt in the snow they’d clicked. “For all you know you’ll have some dumb shank as your neighbor that’ll ask ya if you’re a bloody elf.”

Thomas fixed Newt with a Look: they did not talk about how embarrassing Thomas was when they first met. They just didn’t.

Or, well, Thomas didn’t. Newt liked to bring it up whenever he had the chance.

Newt’s voice lost some of it’s fake cheer and instead he offered something real, “Sunny has been cryin’ for the past two days. She’s utterly distraught over this.”

Thomas’s nickname had stuck from that very first day and now it was the only name people ever called her. He sincerely hoped she never grew out of it.

“Well at least one of you seems bothered by it,” Thomas muttered. He regretted it almost immediately.

“Tommy don’t be like that. You know I hate this as much as you do,” Newt pleaded. “I just don’t think me sittin’ here sayin’ how much I’ll miss ya will make much of a difference.”

“Well it might! Even Gally cried okay and you’re just acting like it’s perfectly normal!”

“Gally didn’t move halfway across the world when he was eight years old, mate.”

“So, what, that means what’s happening now doesn’t matter?!”

“Of course it matters! You’re my best mate and I’m gonna be lost without you!”

“Boys?”

Thomas’s mom called out from the back door, and Thomas could see her peeking her head out from the window they had in their igloo. Her voice cut directly through the anger Thomas felt and left something worse instead.

“Everything okay out there? I heard yelling.”

“Yeah, mom,” Thomas answered though his voice cracked. “Everything’s fine.”

“Okay, dinner is in ten!”

The sound of the back door shutting felt like a perfect example of his life.

“Tommy, listen, I—”

“Don’t. It’s fine, I’m sorry okay? I shouldn’t take it out on you.”

There was a beat of silence that charged with air with tension and Thomas had no idea what to do with it. He and Newt had never fought, never disagreed, never been pitted against each other. Their parents always said they were co-dependent and laughed like it was some sort of joke, but now that they were about to be separated Thomas didn’t know what to do with himself.

“How’d you do it?” Thomas asked quietly.

“What, move?”
“No. I mean yes. I mean… you left everything and everyone and just, came and made new friends and were happy. But I don’t want new friends, I want you guys.”

“And you’ll have us, Tommy. Every Tuesday at the very least you’ll know where to find us all, plus it’s not like we can’t keep in touch.”

A small knot of something released in his chest at the mention of Tuesdays. Every Tuesday was WoW day, new raids, new dungeons, or just trampling over a battleground. Some part of Thomas had been worried that with him being in a new time zone they’d go on without him, but they’d find a way to make it work.

“How do you even make new friends?” he asked.

Newt shifted in the igloo so that his arm was around Thomas’s shoulders.

“I was lucky with you. There I was, convinced I’d only have Sonya for the rest of forever, and this crazy kid bounced in front of me and told me he thought I was magic. So, I did the only reasonable thing that could be done and asked him if he wanted to make snow angels.”

Thomas felt his body move with Newt’s shrug and wondered how it was possible to want to laugh while trying not to cry.

“They don’t even have snow where I’m going,” Thomas said sadly. “So I can’t use the same tactic.”

“No, but you can use this as an excuse to travel a bit. You love travelling, you’ve always wanted to! Now you’re goin’ somewhere very far away!”

“I wanna go cold places, Newt. Not the beach.”

“Right, well, I still say you’re whacked for that, but. You’ll make friends, you’ll have us still, and you can still put away money in that little bank of yours to go and see the cold places. I doubt it’ll be as bad as you make it out to be.”

Newt’s voice was calming, and part of Thomas was glad that Newt had decided not to show that he was upset at all. He didn’t think he’d be able to keep from sobbing like a little girl if Newt started to cry.

“Hey, Newt?” Thomas asked after they’d been quiet for a few more minutes.

“Yea?”

“You wanna go make snow angels?”

Thomas pretended that the noise Newt made was just a weird sounding laugh, and that was why his body shook a bit.

“Yeah, mate. Let’s go make some bloody snow angels.”

His Christmas that year was warm, his brightly colored coats and scarves packed away in a box that would never be opened. He wore shorts and watched the sun peek through clouds and cast odd shadows around the trees in their new yard. One of them would have been perfect for climbing if he’d had someone to climb them with.
The only good thing about it was that it fell on a Tuesday, which meant that eventually his mom allowed him to run upstairs and log in to WoW for the first time since they’d moved. Already the time difference was getting to be a problem; although it was still kind of early in San Diego, New York was like 3 hours ahead.

{Guild Message: Welcome to the Glade!}
{Greenie has logged on}
{Griffon}: TOMMY
{Greenie}: about time
{Griffon}: sorry guys, only just got everything settled in. mom wouldn’t let me come up earlier, said I shouldn’t be playing video games on Christmas.
{Magneato}: but Christmas is for family!
{BumbleBee}: we didn’t mind waiting
{LizardKing}: you like your house okay? What’s your room like?
{Frypan}: does it have a nice kitchen
{Legoman}: raid starts in 15, just queued us up
{Zorro has logged on}
{Zorro}: am I late? Did I miss it?
{Magneato}: dude even tom beat you on
{Greenie}: kitchen is fine, full of boxes. This room is bigger than my old one, has a good window.
{Greenie}: there’s a little kid next door named chuck that came to say hi
{LizardKing}: better than nothing
{Griffon}: you gonna adopt him too?
{BumbleBee}: might be nice to get some new blood in here
{Frypan}: we are the smallest guild
{Griffon}: but we’ve never needed anyone else

{Whisper from LizardKing}: You doin okay mate?
{Whisper to LizardKing}: tryin to be
Part III

Christmas, 16 years old

Life went on.

Thomas did make friends: Teresa and Aris and even little Chuck next door. He kept saving for the big trip he would take some day, one good thing about California was that everyone was always looking for someone to take care of their lawns. Thomas made a good amount of money every year mowing and weed whacking and pruning garden beds. The older he got the more yards he could take care of—his bank of travel cash filled up and he’d had to get another one.

Some nostalgic part of him refused to let him save it in a bank account like his mom kept urging him to do.

California wasn’t horrible once he got used to it, but he never made it through December without aching to feel the cold. His new friends were nice, and so was his track team, but he’d never reach the same level of comradery with them as he had with his friends back home, even with how they’d drifted over the years.

It wasn’t like they never spoke; every Tuesday, like clockwork, they all logged on to WoW and chatted and updated each other on their lives. And the updates weren’t just for Thomas’s benefit, apparently as they’d all grown up and changed interests their group had split apart a bit. Not in a bad way, not that Thomas could tell at least, but in the way that they didn’t hang out every day, or even every month, anymore.

Alby had basically stopped playing except for Tuesdays; he’d gotten busy with a new girlfriend and football and a part time job after school, but not so busy that when a new expansion dropped for the game, he didn’t take a week and level Legoman to the highest level so he wouldn’t be left behind.

Their group had even survived the announcement that during homecoming that year Ben had gotten so fed up watching Gally awkwardly dance with some girl he hated that he’d marched right up to them and kissed Gally full on the mouth. *That* had sparked a round of confessions in the guild; Thomas was fairly certain he was bisexual and apparently they were all a bit curious about Sunny’s friendship with a girl named Harriet.
Frypan took cooking classes and spent his extra time helping his mom take care of their grandmother. He still played WoW on his own, even made an alliance character, but he wasn’t as social anymore. From what Thomas could tell he and Zart were still attached at the hip; he was under the impression that Zart grew fresh produce for Frypan to use in his more experimental recipes.

Minho got extremely into sports—soccer and track—and was always going out of town to compete with his team. He’d won first place at the state tournament for Cross Country that fall, and Thomas had bragged to everyone on his team that he’d learned from the best in New York.

Newt had gotten quiet. Thomas still counted him as his best friend, and he always would, but there was only so much that could be done when you lived three hours and a whole country away. It didn’t seem like Newt really hung out with their old friends anymore, he was mostly focused on his music, but lately when they spoke Thomas noticed something off.

It made his heart hurt, a little, to think about how close they used to be. Now they could go months without talking (except for Tuesday’s, always excepting Tuesday’s), but that didn’t change the fact that when they did speak on either Vent or through texting they mostly fell into place just like old times.

Mostly, but not quite. And as time went that ‘not quite’ kept getting bigger.

But the important bit, to Thomas anyway, was that no matter what they all had going on in their lives Tuesday’s remained the same. They all worked their schedules around it and hadn’t missed a single Tuesday since they were all 8 years old—the day that Thomas had met Newt.

Which was what made that day so unsettling.

{Guild Message: Welcome to the Glade!}

[Greenie has logged on]

[Greenie]: hey guys

When no one answered Thomas switched over to Vent to see if there was anyone on there… but there was no one.

Thomas sat back and stared at his monitor in confusion—was it actually Monday and Thomas was just an idiot? But, no, it was definitely Tuesday.

A cold, sinking feeling started in his gut.

He called Newt.

No answer.

He called again.

Nothing.

Thomas stared down at his phone in disbelief and concern—since when did Newt not answer his phone?
He called Minho.

Minho answered.

“Shit, Thomas, we forgot to call you,” Minho rushed out. He sounded wrecked, utterly destroyed. His voice was shaky, and Thomas could hear a lot of voices in the background as well as a loudspeaker announcing something. “I’m so sorry man.”

“What do you mean you forgot to call me? It’s Tuesday.” Thomas tried to sound steady, but he knew he didn’t quite manage it. “Min, what’s going on.”

Minho let out a sob. “He jumped, that stupid shank fuckin’ jumped and if me’n Alby didn’t normally walk that way home from practice who knows what would have happened.”

The world froze around a single question.

“Who?”

“Newt.”

There was a moment of pain in his knees but that was overshadowed by the ringing in his ears and the sharp edges stabbing him from inside his lungs. Eventually sound filtered in through the ringing noise, and Thomas turned his head to find that it was coming from his phone… his phone that was on the floor next to him.

When had he fallen?

“Thomas! TOM! Fuckin’ shit man don’t you do this to me too okay, I can’t take it right now—I’m, fuck, slim it take the phone.”

“Thomas, get your shit together okay, answer me!”

Gally.

Gally was with Minho, Gally had Minho’s phone.

Gally was with Minho because Newt had jumped.

Thomas dove for his phone.

“Is he alive?” Thomas’s throat felt like gravel and there was salt on his lips, apparently at some point he’d started crying.

“Yes, he’s alive,” Gally said slowly, but Thomas could hear the slight release of tension at hearing Thomas speak. He answered so carefully though that Thomas couldn’t relax yet.

“Is he gonna stay that way?” Thomas asked again, full of trepidation.

Gally sighed, “Yeah, doctor’s think so. They aren’t letting any of us in to see him though, Sunny has been coming out to give us updates.”

“Us?”

“We’re all here man, all of us. Min and Alby called us all in when they got Newt on the ambulance, but we knew you’d still be at school and wouldn’t have your phone,” Gally explained in a rush. “Ben said we shouldn’t let you find out from a text or voicemail, and then we lost track of time.”
All of them were there in support, friends that had drifted over the years coming back together when it mattered.

Everyone except for Thomas, because he was on the wrong side of the world.

“I gotta talk to him,” Thomas said. He heard the phone get passed off to someone, and it was Sunny’s light voice who spoke next.

“Tommy?” she said, and the pain in her voice made Thomas want to rage at the world. Her voice was meant for music, not this.

“No tears, Sunny. It’s all gonna be okay. I’m so sorry I’m not there,” Thomas choked out.

“I was so scared when they brought him in, but now he’s awake and all that really got hurt was his leg, but—”

Her voice broke off with emotion and Thomas waited patiently for her to pull herself back together.

“It’s my fault,” she said steadily.

Thomas’s denial of this fact was almost drowned out by the number of voices that sparked in protest on the other end of the phone.

“No, you don’t understand,” she cried. “I can’t explain but it is and all I want to do is help but he’s so bloody stubborn!”

“Sunny, is he awake?” Thomas asked when she managed to calm down a bit more. He could hear people talking to her on the other end and so he tried to be patient for her to answer.

“Yes, sorry Tom, he’s awake. Has been for a minute but he won’t let anybody but the doctors stay in there,” she said. “He practically threw mum out just a few minutes ago.”

“Does he have his phone?”

“No, I’ve got it actually, why?”

“You want to help him?”

“Of course I do! What kind of question is that?”

“What are you planning Thomas?” a voice tried to say through the phone, but Thomas couldn’t figure out who’s it was.

“Thomas, Ben just asked—”

“I heard him. Okay,” Thomas took a deep breath. “First thing is to get all the guys to leave and go home. Then throw Newt’s phone and tell him to answer a shuckin’ text message. Then bring Newt his laptop—not his music one, the gaming one. I’ll handle the rest.”

“What, seriously?” Sonya said in disbelief. “You’re mad if you think I can get—”

There was the sound of a phone being passed and suddenly it was Minho speaking again.

“Tuesday’s?” he asked.

“Tuesday’s.”
“He’s not going to talk to you, though,” Minho countered. “There’s no way.”

“Tell Sunny to tell Newt ‘snow angels’ when she throws the phone at him. He’ll talk.”

“…Snow angels.”

There was a surprised ‘oh’ near the microphone, and then he heard Alby speak.

“Sunny just ran off to Newt’s room, see you in the Glade, man.”

The call ended as abruptly as it had begun and left Thomas feeling bereft.

The silence was agonizing, but not as agonizing as trying to figure out what to say in a text to Newt. In the end he decided to repeat what he’d told Sunny to say and hope for the best. There was no guarantee it would work anyway.

[To: Newt] Snow angels.

And he waited.

Five minutes.

Ten minutes.

At thirteen minutes his phone finally vibrated.

[From: Newt] I don’t want to talk.

[From: Newt] and what’s with snow angels anyway, what’re you on about?

A breath Thomas hadn’t realized he’d been holding whooshed out and rearranged his entire damn worldview with the strength of it.

[To: Newt] It worked, didn’t it?

[From: Newt] debatable.

[To: Newt] I only have one question, really

[From: Newt] I don’t have to answer to you.

[To: Newt] Should I be buying the plane ticket I’ve spent the past fifteen minutes staring at?

[From: Newt] seriously

[From: Newt] that’s the bloody question you used snow angels for
[To: Newt] thought you said snow angels had no significance

[From: Newt] never said that

[To: Newt] You also didn’t answer my question

[From: Newt] you can’t afford a bloody plane ticket mate, so what’s the point in asking

[To: Newt] We both know that I can, actually. I’ve got just enough.

Thomas had hoped that Newt would react to that statement, but never in a million years had he expected for his phone to ring almost immediately. He wondered briefly if he could possibly hide the fact that he’d been crying, but in the end, he figured it probably couldn’t hurt for Newt to know.

“Thomas bloody Greene you are, under absolutely no circumstances, to ever use that money on me,” Newt croaked. He sounded drugged, he sounded weak, he sounded broken, but above all else he sounded angry.

It was the best thing Thomas had ever heard.

“You have never in your life called me Thomas,” he replied, perfectly aware of how his sob-roughened voice must sound through the tinny speaker. “You shouldn’t start now.”

“I mean it,” Newt said. “That money isn’t spent on me. Ever. You’ve been saving since you were five years old for your trip around the world and you’ll not waste it.”

“That’s why I asked if I should be buying a ticket,” Thomas said quietly.

“Why?”

“Because. If you’d had it your way, I’d be buying a plane ticket for your funeral.”

Silence.

Well, almost silence. The beeps from whatever machines Newt was hooked up to came through quite clearly.

“No.” Newt finally answered.

“You wouldn’t be around to stop me.”

“No.”

“So if you’re planning on—”

“No, Tommy, alright?!” Newt yelled out. He sounded almost desperate if Thomas was being honest with himself, but that desperation was a good thing. It had to be. Surely feeling something was better than feeling numb, right? “Don’t buy a buggin’ ticket, don’t spend that money to come home, don’t you bloody do it. I’m not gonna try and finish the job.”

Thomas couldn’t stop the shuddering sob he released at hearing it said aloud and didn’t want to. Especially not when he heard an answering one on the other end.

“Good,” Thomas said. “Promise?”
“I promise,” Newt whispered.

“Good that.”

A notification sounded from his computer—someone had probably made it home already. Sure enough, Zart and Alby were both trying to get his attention.

[Legoman has logged on]

[Legoman]: Thomas? You there?

[Legoman]: ???????????

[Zorro has logged on]

[Zorro]: anyone home yet?

[Legoman]: yeah man I’m here, Thomas should be too but he’s afk

[Zorro]: think he got him to talk?

[Legoman]: hope so

[You are no longer AFK]

[Greenie]: sorry guys I’m here

[Greenie]: on the phone with him now

“What’s all that noise?” Newt asked. “Are you—are you seriously on WoW right now?”

Despite the whole situation, Thomas couldn’t help the wet laugh that escaped.

“It’s Tuesday, what else would I be doing? What, you think something more important came up?”

The disbelieving chuckle on the other end of the line warmed his heart, and he refocused back on the guild chat.

[Legoman]: you got him to talk?

[Zorro]: shit man how’s he doin?

[Zorro]: course he got him to talk, it’s Thomas

[Frypan has logged on]

[Frypan]: how’re things lookin?

[Legoman]: Thomas got him on the phone
“Who all’s on?” Newt asked quietly.

“So far everyone but you and Ben.”

“I heard they… well. Sonya said they’re the ones who found me.”

Thomas didn’t know what to say, how to handle the conversation. He wanted so badly to ask what had driven him to do it, what could have been so bad that he wanted to leave the world behind. But that would be selfish, wouldn’t it? Besides, he figured the only reason he was able to keep Newt talking was because Thomas hadn’t asked him why.

And talking was good.

“Tommy?”

“Yeah,” Thomas cleared his throat. “Min said he and Alby found you when they walked home from practice, and they called in the cavalry once the ambulance left.”

There was another beat of silence, so Thomas checked the chat again for something to do with his hands.

[BumbleBee has logged on]

[Frypan]: just glad he’s talking at all tbh

[BumbleBee]: he’s talking?

[Zorro]: yeah Thomas said he’s got him on the phone

[Griffon]: how’d he manage that anyway

[Magneato]: something about snow angels

[Greenie]: he just asked who found him

[Greenie]: or, well, asked to have it confirmed anyway
[Legoman]: let him know that once he’s better I’m gonna kick his ass for the lifetime worth of nightmares I’m about to have

[BumbleBee]: shut up man, be glad you were there when you were

[Griffon]: I wish he’d just talked to us

[Magneato]: when were we around?

[Frypan]: ?

[Zorro]: seriously

[Legoman]: he’s known where we live for 8 years

[BumbleBee]: we talk literally every week

[Magneato]: right, but when was the last time any of us actually hung out with him in person?

[BumbleBee]: .

[Griffon]: uh

[Frypan]: at least a year

[Zorro]: fuck

[Legoman]: tbh I ain’t seen any of you shanks except for minho for more than like 20 minutes since freshman year

[Legoman]: and minho because we live next to each other, and play sports

[Magneato]: exactly.

Thomas’s heart hurt—if Newt hadn’t been with any of them, who had he been around? Who were his friends? Thomas knew the guy was practically married to his music, but past that? He and Newt only every talked about music, Sunny, and Thomas’s friends and antics.

“They all came,” Thomas heard Newt whisper. “I can’t believe they all came.”

“Of course they did, Newt. If I’d been closer, I would have beaten them all,” Thomas said softly. After seeing what they’d all just admitted to, how they hadn’t really been a part of Newt’s life, Thomas got how Newt might have thought they wouldn’t care.

But there’s a big difference between growing apart and abandoning your family.

“What are they saying?” Newt asked.

“Do you want the honest answer or…?” Thomas hedged.

“Honest, please,” Newt said, voice heavy with drugs and pain. “I need to know.”

“They’re blaming themselves.”
“Shit.”

“Yeah.”

[Greenie]: it’s not your fault guys

[Greenie]: seriously

[Magneato]: easy for you to say, you’re not HERE

[Greenie]: so?? I still talk to him, I still noticed something off and did nothing

[BumbleBee]: at least you noticed

[Greenie]: but what’s worse: not noticing, or noticing and doing nothing?

[Zorro]: I have no idea

“And what’re you saying?”

“That I’m as equally to blame as they are.”

Newt made a complicated noise, frustrated, “No, that’s not—”

But Thomas interrupted him.

“D’you know that every single night, without fail, I listen to that CD you made me of you messing around on those instruments?”

“You—what?”

“Track 8 is my favorite,” Thomas elaborated. He wasn’t entirely positive what point he was trying to make, he only knew that it was important.

“The one with the piano and violin?” Newt asked, but it came out as more a statement than a question.

“It calms me down. Every night, Newt. I love hearing you play; I picture your face while I’m listening to it, and literally fall asleep to images of you and those instruments every. Single. Night.”

Thomas heard Newt sniff a few times, and one of the machines was beeping wildly for a few moments. In the background he heard a nurse come in and Newt wave her off.

“I had no idea,” Newt admitted.

“Exactly. Which is a problem. You didn’t know about that, you don’t know that I still consider you the best friend that I’ve ever had, you don’t know that I miss you like hell, and you don’t know that the thought of existing in a world without you in it is... unfathomable,” Thomas stated.

He couldn’t keep his voice steady, didn’t try to, but he tried to force as much sincerity into it as he could. He had to make Newt understand.
“Don’t apologize, alright? Just. Talk to me. I’m begging you. In the future…” Thomas trailed off and ran his hand through his hair and over his face. “I’m here. I’m here for you. I will always have my phone on me, always, just. Please.”

[Magneato]: is he gonna get on?

[Greenie]: he doesn’t know that Sunny is bringing his laptop yet

[Legoman]: you gonna tell him?

[Greenie]: not the right time

“Aren’t you gonna ask me why I did it?”

Newt’s voice was a whisper of wind, so faint that it could’ve been his imagination, but it made Thomas remember the first time they’d met.

“You’re not gonna make fun of my name?”

“Of course not, lizards are cool!”

“Do you want me to ask?” Thomas replied, though the lizard bit was tempting. He wondered if Newt caught the parallel of not.

“Not really,” Newt admitted.

“Then no, I’m not. Are you gonna be okay? Physically, I mean.”

“Doctor isn’t hopeful about my leg, said it took the brunt of my weight when… well.”

“Does this mean I’ll be taller than you now?”

That shocked a laugh out of his friend, “Tommy I don’t think even this will make you taller than me.”

“Well, shit,” Thomas said in mock-disappointment. “What’s even the point, then?”

There was a beat of silence before Thomas realized what he’d asked on accident.

“I don’t know,” was the soft answer.

The moment was ruined by the sound of a door banging open on Newt’s end; Newt’s spluttering confirmed Thomas’s suspicions that it was Sunny.

[Greenie]: sounds like Sunny showed up

[Legoman]: about time
“What’re you on about?” Newt demanded of his little sister.

Thomas couldn’t hear the reply but judging by the snort he assumed that she blamed it all on him.

Figures.

“Tommy. What the fuck.”

“What? We need a healer,” Thomas said with a grin.

“Seriously,” was the deadpan response.

Thomas couldn’t help the shrug even though he knew Newt wouldn’t be able to see it.

“What? It’s Tuesday.”

[LizardKing has logged on]

[LizardKing]: I might recommend we not go for a mythic right now

[LizardKing]: heals might be a tad slow

[Legoman]: you read my mind, got us queued up for a heroic

[Magneato]: think you’re up for it?

[LizardKing]: of course

[LizardKing]: its Tuesday, after all

They stayed on the phone the whole time, though for the most part they were silent. Eventually Newt couldn’t stay awake any longer and his mom and Sonya were adamant about being allowed inside, so they all bid him goodnight and promised they’d play again tomorrow.

And, for the first time in years, they did.

And the next day.

And the next.

Thomas spent Christmas day at the kitchen table running battlegrounds with Newt until his fingers felt like they might fall off, and hoped it made a difference. That somehow losing themselves to this game was exactly what they needed to keep Newt grounded.
They didn’t speak on the phone again, Newt said the pain medicine made him nauseous, but they texted back and forth for a few hours each day. Not about anything important, nothing substantial, just enough to keep up the flow of conversation.

For the most part Newt asked Thomas to tell him about all the places on his travel list.

Thomas found out from the others that they’d all started making plans to hang out with Newt more often, to actively seek him out.

Minho was going to visit him in the hospital every day, and Ben intended to help with the physical therapy since that was what he wanted to do in college.

Thomas was shaken to learn that, yes, when it healed that leg was definitely going to need physical therapy. Newt would be left with the reminder of his decision for the rest of his life—but at least he would have one.

His parents offered to buy Thomas a ticket to go and visit New York that summer, once they’d forced him to explain why he’d spent Christmas eve sobbing into his pillow, but Thomas declined. His bargain with Newt was fresh on his mind, and somehow he felt like that would be cheating the system.

So they played WoW, and Thomas carefully didn’t ask the questions he burned to ask, and he tried to give Newt something to live for.

Himself.

Part IV

Christmas, 20 years old

Thomas hadn’t been home in New York since he was 12 years old.

He’d meant to go back for college, he really had… until he got that track scholarship to Berkeley. He would have been insane to give that up, no matter how badly he wanted to go to NYU with Minho, Ben and Gally. Alby’d gotten himself into Columbia, Frypan into some hotshot culinary school, and Zart had decided to pass on college entirely and opened up his own nursery.

Frypan would still swear up and down that the secret to his success was Zart’s produce.

Newt, ever the odd one out, had gotten into the Manhattan School of Music and had plans to try and get into Julliard for his master’s in composition.

Not that Newt being on his own was much of a worry anymore, really. After the ‘Scare’ as they all referred to it, their group of friends had taken it as a wake up call that they were violently against. They saw each other more, all had apartments near each other in the city, and refused to let more than a week or two go by before they all met up for drinks and conversation.
All of them, except for Thomas.

He’d seen Minho for a single day during their freshman year of college; Minho’s team had come to Berkeley for a soccer game and Thomas had blown off his classes so that he could go and watch. They’d caught up, reminisced, and spammed the group chat with about a million selfies. But Minho was gone as quickly as he’d come, and Thomas was left on his own.

Part of why he hadn’t gone back was his agreement with Newt. Thomas wouldn’t spend his savings on a plane ticket, Newt wouldn’t finish the job. Or something. Theoretically Thomas could have saved up enough for his trip, but he never pulled enough hours at the restaurant to cover rent and other expenses, let alone save up extra for a trip home.

They talked about it, sometimes.

After the Scare, Newt would sometimes ask Thomas to talk about places he wanted to travel. He wanted as many details as Thomas could give—it took longer than he cared to admit for Thomas to realize why Newt did it.

He only asked about Thomas’s future trip on his dark days, the hard days, when he needed a distraction or a reminder. He couldn’t let Thomas use his money on a plane ticket to his funeral, because if he did then Thomas couldn’t go and visit all those wonderful places.

If that was how Newt wanted to distract himself, ground himself, who was Thomas to complain?

So he told him in exquisite detail about these heated igloos you could stay in up in the arctic, and how they had clear ceilings so you could see the Northern Lights. He told Newt about the Glaciers in Alaska, the midwinter traditions in Norway, and the way that castle Neuschwanstein looked under a blanket of snow.

Over and over Thomas would describe these places, including pictures, as often as Newt would ask. As the years passed the nights when Newt would ask became less frequent, but then there would be a string of days seemingly out of the blue where Newt would question him every night.

That was when Thomas was the most tempted to go home, to hold his friend until the darkness went away again.

He wasn’t sure what he and Newt were, besides best friends. He still listened to Newt playing music every night (much to the consternation of the numerous partners he’d had over the years, for some reason they never seemed to stick) though now Newt steadily supplied him with new arrangements and eagerly awaited Thomas’s feedback.

To his knowledge Newt had never been in a relationship, just had a few one-night stands that he never mentioned to anyone other than the fact that they had happened—and Thomas wouldn’t have even known that much if Sunny didn’t rat Newt out. Hazards of living with your little sister, Thomas supposed, though to be fair she spent a good amount of time at her girlfriend’s place in Brooklyn.

They’d been right about Harriet, after all.

So, in short, Thomas had come to terms with the fact that he was afraid to go home, afraid of what might await him when he got there, afraid of what form it would take. And it wouldn’t have been a problem, truly, if Sunny hadn’t been in regular correspondence with his mother in regard to her interests in graphic design… and so had found out that his parents would be going on a trip to Australia for Christmas, and Thomas would be alone.

She’d ratted him out.
Brat.

Which was why he was sat at his computer during their standard Tuesday, the day before winter break, fielding questions on why the hell he hadn’t bought a ticket to go home to New York to join them all for the holidays.

[Greenie]: I’m not sure what kind of money you think I have where I can just fly across the country at the drop of the hat.

[Magneato]: you’ve been using some variation of that excuse since we were 12.

[Legoman]: Yeah, you’d think he’d have gotten more creative by now.

[BumbleBee]: Have you guys ever asked yourselves why we still type on Tuesday’s when we literally use voice chat every single other time we play?

[Greenie]: TRADITION

[Griffon]: TRADITION

[Legoman]: TRADITION

[Frypan]: TRADITION

[Magneato]: TRADITION

[Zorro]: TRADITION

[LizardKing]: I think it might have something to do with tradition, mate. Can’t be sure, though. Pure speculation.

[BumbleBee]: Right, just checking.

[Magneato]: Gally get your boyfriends head out of your ass and into the game

[Griffon]: fiancé. I proposed two months ago, Minho. you were THERE.

[Magneato]: he asked a stupid question so I downgraded him. you also didn’t deny his head was up your ass.

[Legoman]: ffs can you slintheads focus long enough to kill the GIANT SHUCKING PORTAL THAT KEEPS DROPPING DEMONS ON MY HEAD

[LizardKing]: come off it, I’ve been healing you for five minutes, you’re fine

[Greenie]: yeah if you’ve got the time to type that much you’re clearly not in danger

[Frypan]: besides I think you’re all getting distracted from the point

[Magneato]: right, yeah, THOMAS COME HOME
[Zorro]: maybe he’s forgotten what it’s like to have sub-zero temperatures

[Greenie]: I could never forget that

[Greenie]: You guys know how much I miss it

[BumbleBee]: see he misses the weather, but not us

[LizardKing]: zart I swear if you spam aggro near another buggin’ mob I’m leavin you to fend for yourself

[Zorro]: sorry, gear hunting

[Legoman]: ffs

[Magneato]: ANYWAYS

[Griffon]: Thomas buy the damn plane ticket so Minho will stop whining

[Greenie]: I’m gonna kill Sunny

[Frypan]: you’d have to go through Harriet first

[BumbleBee]: she’d win

[BumbleBee]: js

[Greenie]: look I may have been scrawny when I was 12, but I DID get bigger

[Magneato]: idk you were still a skinny little shit when I saw you

[Zorro]: and it’s not like you ever upload a good FB photo. Last one was a corner of your head hiding in that weird jeep of yours

[Greenie]: leave Roscoe out of this

[Legoman]: you know who is being too quiet about this?

[Legoman]: Newt, make him come home

[LizardKing]: if you think you can make it round this next bend without dying, I’ll give it a go

[Magneato]: go for it, I’ll hit everyone with a regen

{Whisper from LizardKing}: Call me.

Thomas sighed and did as he was told, setting his character to follow Frypan around until he could focus again. Newt didn’t even bother with a hello, just dove directly into the interrogation.

“Is the reason you’re not coming home the one I think it is?” Newt demanded.

Thomas didn’t want to answer that, so he didn’t. Which, in retrospect, was obviously an answer in and of itself.
Newt sighed, “Tommy…”

“Can you blame me? Only having you over the phone is better than nothing, okay. And I made a promise.” As a defense Thomas knew it was a flimsy one, but it was all he had. In many way’s he’d never gotten over that night and wasn’t sure he ever would.

Thomas was prepared for arguments, prepared for teasing, prepared for a denial of the deal they’d struck between them—maybe a claim that there had never been a deal at all. He was not prepared for what actually happened.

“I miss you, Tommy.” Newt said softly. “Please come home.”

And then Newt hung up.

Thomas sat and stared at his phone in shock for a few moments, long enough to die in game, before he pulled open a travel site.

[Magneato]: wtf why did we all just wipe

[Frypan]: Thomas stopped paying attention and died.

[BumbleBee]: and I died while trying to use a soul stone on him

[Griffon]: and I died avenging him

[Legoman]: forgot newt wasn’t watching

[Zorro]: two hours gone guys, what the FUCK

[Greenie]: Someone had better pick me up from JFK at 5 tomorrow.

[Greenie]: Gotta go pack, see you!

[LizardKing]: I’ll be there.

[Magneato]: WHAT THE FUCK

[Legoman]: are you serious?

[Greenie has logged off]

Snow had a smell.

God’s above and below, he’d forgotten that snow had its own smell. It was crisp, and stinging, and full of wet earth, but it was like smelling all of his favorite memories at once.

He’d been away from home for far too long.

The snow came down in large flakes that spun in beautiful patterns throughout the air around him. It
was like watching the steps to a dance long forgotten but now remembered—a world blanketed in white, wind that touched your soul, and twinkling lights that made it all come to life. The passerby outside of the airport paid him no attention as Thomas took off his gloves, spread his palms out to the frigid air, and spun around in a slow circle with his face to the sky. It was like feeling his life click into place again, a room shuttered up and abandoned finally opened to let in the fresh air.

A particularly strong burst of wind knocked him a little off balance, and he couldn’t help but laugh in joy.

And then he became aware of someone watching him.

Thomas turned to the left where a tall, pale figure stood in the snow and lights with his hands in his pockets and a gob smacked expression on his face. He didn’t seem to care that the wind whipped his hair into a frenzy, or that his cheeks were pink from the cold, or that his mouth was slightly open in shock. The snowflakes caught in his hair and on his coat and in his eyelashes, and the Christmas lights above him made him glow—yet his eyes were fixated on Thomas like he had no idea he could ever look away.

“Magic.”

It wasn’t until Newt grinned that Thomas realized he’d said that out loud.

Newt took a few halting steps forward, and Thomas noted the slight limp that he’d been warned about, but his main focus was that even with the limp, Newt possessed such grace with every move he made. Thomas couldn’t take his eyes off of him, afraid he might miss even the slightest detail in that dancing gait.

“See something you like?” Newt asked, amused and pink faced, with a brow raised.

That voice. Thomas hadn’t heard it unfiltered in so many years that he’d forgotten the way it sang into his very soul, and to hear it again was both a gift and a curse.

Maybe the reason he’d been afraid to come home, the real reason, was this.

There was no going back from this.

This was inevitable.

“Maybe,” Thomas forced out of a throat that forgot how to work. It’d been functioning just fine for many years, but next to Newt everything he said or did felt ridiculous.

How. How had Thomas grown up next door to this amazing creature and ever thought he was straight?

Wait.

What had he just said?

Thomas’s brain finally clicked fully back online to realize that he’d been, very openly, ogling his best friend. And that he’d admitted to potentially liking what it was he saw.

“Oh, I mean, shit.”

Newt laughed, a beautiful full-bodied thing, and Thomas had to fight to keep his jaw from dropping at the sight.
“I missed you too, Tommy,” Newt said before he pulled him into a hug that felt like coming home.

And to think, he’d almost never had this.

Thomas hugged him back hard and tried to put every emotion he could into that hug—he felt the moment the mood shifted. Newt’s hold on him changed, their embrace stopped being one of joy and became instead one of comfort.

It was a hug very overdue.

There were no dry eyes on either of them when they pulled away; Newt openly sniffed and wiped at his eyes.

“Right, well. The lads are all waitin’ on us—I had to fight to be able to come and get you alone, you realize. There was almost a bloody rebellion.”

“I’m not that exciting,” Thomas grumbled, but he obeyed the unspoken command and pulled his luggage behind to follow him. “I’m sure there are much more interesting things they could be doing.”

Newt snorted.

“Ben tried to claim the right since he was the first one of us you’d ever adopted,” he continued. “But that got vetoed down quickly by Frypan.”

“On what grounds?”

“He said since he met you first, he should have his own set of rights.”

“Well what argument did you use to get them to let you?”

“None,” Newt opened the trunk for Thomas to put his bag in. “I left while they were still fighting over it. I doubt they’ve even noticed.”

Thomas laughed so hard he cried.

Without having to be asked, Newt drove the long way around the city so that Thomas could reacquaint himself with the sight of it. As they drove, Newt talked. It was the most Thomas had heard him say all at once in years and he was perfectly content to bask in the sound.

More than once he had to remind himself to pay attention to the words themselves and not the way they rang in his ears.

“We’ll drop your things at mine before we head over, Sunny is out tonight but she ought to be back in the morning,” Newt explained.

Thomas tried not to have a heart attack at the news of where he’d be staying. Somehow from the moment he’d bought the ticket until now he hadn’t spared a single thought as to his sleeping arrangements.

Newt chuckled, “Figured you hadn’t thought about that. Barely been able to focus on anything since you bought the ticket, I bet. Miracle you made it to the buggin’ airport.”

“Aris had to drag me out the door… I was a little distracted,” Thomas admitted with a blush. Aris had been his roommate for a few semesters; he was good guy, much better in small doses. “Thanks for letting me crash, but I could get a hotel if you’d prefer?”
Even as he offered Thomas hoped that Newt would turn it down.

“Are you joking? My best mate comes home after twelve bloody years and you think I’m letting you stay in a hotel?” Newt scoffed and pulled into a parking garage. “You’re whacked. Besides, we’re already here.”

The walk up the apartment from the garage was a blur, Thomas was lost in his own head and more than content to let Newt lead him forwards with guiding gestures and a soothing voice. He wondered if Newt could see the crises happening in his brain, but if he could he didn’t mention it.

For whatever reason, all of Thomas’s nerves abandoned him the moment he crossed the threshold.

“It’s so… clean.”

“I dunno why you’re so surprised, you were always the messy one,” Newt reminded him.

The apartment was reasonably sized, with a clear divide between the living room and kitchen area. It was decorated with warm colors and paintings and furniture that begged you to lose yourself in it. And everywhere were instruments. Piano in the corner, cello on a stand near the window, violin in a case by the doorway. Woodwinds, brass, strings—no matter what direction Thomas looked, there was an instrument.

It was perfect, and Thomas told him so.

“Thanks,” Newt said, suddenly shy. He busied himself in the kitchen while Thomas allowed himself to explore a little. “Sunny is always gone so she doesn’t really mind me leaving my instrum—no, wait!”

Thomas stopped dead in his tracks in the doorway he’d just pushed open and fought to catch his breath.

Northern Lights. The ceiling was plastered with amazing photos of the Northern Lights. There, on the wall by the window, was a painting of castle Neuschwanstein. Everywhere in the room was a small piece of something; photos of festivals, glaciers, mountain ranges… everything that Thomas had ever described to Newt on his darkest days.

He couldn’t breathe.

“Bugger,” Newt whispered from right behind him.

Thomas whipped around to stare, pleading for an explanation, any explanation, for why all of Thomas’s hopes and dreams were plastered over what was clearly Newt’s bedroom.

“I guess we’ll be having this talk sooner rather than later… I’ll text Min that you’re tired and will be by tomorrow. C’mon then,” Newt gestured for Thomas to follow him back to the kitchen, defeated. “We’re both far too sober for this.”

Thomas followed him in a daze and tossed back the shot of whiskey offered him without hesitation. While Newt poured him another, Thomas took note of how his face had lost all color and the sudden shake in his hands. When he fumbled the stopper on the bottle Thomas reached out and covered Newt’s hands with his own to steady them.

Newt took a deep breath to center himself before he nodded, and Thomas released his hands.

When they were finally sat across from each other on the sofa that was just as comfortable as it
looked, Thomas readied himself to listen to the story he’d been so careful to never ask for. The one that Newt now offered up freely despite the hunted look in his eyes.

“Things weren’t the same after you left,” Newt began slowly, and Thomas closed his eyes and took another sip. Newt was right, they were too sober for this. “I don’t think any of us quite realized how you were the one that had brought us all together and kept us there. I’m not sure how it happened, though I know it wasn’t quickly, but I was so lost without you there. And then I was all alone.

“We did our best to keep in touch, you and I, but it only got harder as the days went on and the time difference seeped in, and we lost all we’d once had to bond us together. Growing up you hear how people grow apart but of course you never think it’ll happen to you and your friends. Until it does. We had Tuesday’s still, of course we did, but every other day I had no one but Sonya. So, I turned to music.

“At first is was wonderful; I loved music and it loved me back, but the more I fell into music the more separated I grew from everyone else. I grew to hate it—remember that first violin Mum gave me?” Newt asked.

Thomas nodded, “The birthday right before I moved away, you were so excited to learn it.”

Newt nodded and continued, “Yes, that one. I destroyed it.”

Thomas must have looked shocked because Newt laughed, a harsh and biting thing, and took a sip from his glass.

“At that point it was just something else that separated me from everyone else. I destroyed it just before I’d turned 16 and didn’t touch anything to do with music until after the Jump. Of course, abandoning music did nothing to help any of my problems. I’d already isolated myself so much at that point that I had no idea how to dig myself out. Of course I still spoke to you all on a weekly basis, but not of anything real. You’d all had your lives managed so well, and I didn’t want to go above the scheduled amount of time that I was allowed to be part of them for fear that I’d no longer be welcome at all.”

Newt fiddled with his glass and Thomas took another drink, if only to silence the voice inside of him that raged at the idea of Newt in so much pain.

“I felt alone, completely alone, and I was convinced that no one gave a damn about me except my family. And for awhile that was enough… until the day I caught Sonya and Harriet kissing in the little gazebo in our back yard.”

The confusion must have shown on Thomas’s face, but Newt gestured for him to be patient, all would make sense in due time.

“You never really got to spend much time with my step-dad, but he can be a real piece of work. For a long time he had no problems expressing a certain range of sentiments… of a less than savory nature. Something like homosexuality was not something welcome, or tolerated, in his household. I knew this, Sunny knew this, but I also knew that Sonya wouldn’t be able to keep her secret for much longer now that she and Harriet had finally come together. So, I did what any brother would do.”

Newt took another large gulp before he spoke again, and the words shocked Thomas down to his toes.

“I came out first, so she wouldn’t bare the brunt of it.”

Thomas stared at Newt until he finally met his eyes, and what he read there was enough to make him
want to scream—fear, uncertainty, regret, shame, and understanding. So many times Newt could have told them; it’s not as though he would have had to be worried about acceptance, not with Ben and Gally and Thomas himself. Suddenly a lot of pieces came flying together: Newt never having a relationship, never discussing his one-night stands, Sunny telling Thomas what she could in the hopes that Thomas would either put it all together or force Newt into admitting it himself.

Thomas nodded once at Newt and took another drink before he gestured for him to continue, though he bit his tongue so hard it must have started bleeding.

“He didn’t take it well,” Newt said lightly. “I was no longer welcome in the house and I felt I had no where I could go. Mum didn’t stand up to him, not at first, and I point blank refused to allow Sonya to say anything. I made it three days after that, staying outside in the cold and not attending school, before I realized that no one but Mum and Sonya even noticed I was gone. I’d pushed myself into such a tight, lonely little corner that even the school administration hadn’t sent someone looking for me. That’s the night I jumped.”

Thomas couldn’t hear that phrase without flinching.

“Things happened quickly, after that. You all came back into my life like a battering ram. I believe from the moment Sonya crashed into my hospital room, threw my phone at my face and said ‘snow angels’ before flouncing right back out I regretted making the Jump. I knew I regretted it the moment you threatened to use your life saving’s to fly home… either for my funeral, or otherwise.”

They were both silent for a moment after that; Thomas didn’t know where to look, what to do with his hands, so instead of doing anything of note he took another drink.

“I couldn’t let that happen. It gave me a concrete, real reason to keep going another day. I couldn’t rob you of that dream. Of course, logically, you could’ve just started saving again. But that wasn’t the point. You gave me a reason. And then not five minutes later you gave me back my music as well.”

Thomas remembered well the moment he’d confessed to his obsession with Newt’s music; looking at where Newt was now because of that one moment of Thomas making himself vulnerable… he’d never been happier he’d done it.

“People constantly surrounded me after that. Our friends came back and didn’t let me get left behind again, Mum point blank told Dad that if he had a problem with me then he could be the one to leave, and I could play my music knowing that someone wanted it. You’d think all of those things would mean I had plenty of reasons to stay alive… but not really. In the darkest parts of my mind it seemed as though all of that was only happening because I’d jumped. It was done out of sympathy—they didn’t really care, they just didn’t want the guilt on their conscience.”

Newt cleared his throat and looked anywhere but at Thomas, who was finding it very hard to look anywhere but at Newt.

“Everything except your savings, your trip. You’d been planning that since you were a kid—it wasn’t something new. If I died, you would spend that money to come home. It was a solid fact, one I could wrap my head around even on my darkest days. So when I found myself in that hole of doubt, I would reach out to you and ask you to tell me about your dreams. I’d let myself dream alongside you, and I’d leave myself reminders. The pictures. You spent each night allowing my dreams, my music, to lull you to sleep.”

Finally, finally, Newt looked up and his crying eyes met Thomas’s own.
"I spent each night staring at the Northern Lights and let myself fall asleep to yours."

As explanations went it was more than Thomas could have ever hoped for.

It was terrifying.

Eventually it became clear that Newt was done speaking and it was up to Thomas to fill the silence.

“And now?” he breathed.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m here, Newt.” Thomas whispered. “You told me to come home and I came. I’m here, so now what?”

“Now…” Newt sighed and gave a helpless little shrug, uncertain, but Thomas’s gaze was unrelenting in its demand for an answer. “Now I’d quite like to dream together, if you don’t mind.”

Thomas released the breath he’d been holding and put both his and Newt’s whiskey glasses onto the coffee table. Then he reached out with both of his arms and pulled Newt into his chest.

They held each other through the shakes, the tears, the years of past loneliness, until they eventually fell asleep.

And then they held each other while they dreamed.

Everything ached.

His body was contorted into a weird position and there was a heavy weight on top of him that pinned his legs into the odd way they were bent. Thomas fought the grit that sealed shut his eyelids and was met with a mass of messy blond hair that smelled like some kind of mint shampoo—earthy and clean. The memories of the previous night rushed his brain the moment that Thomas recognized his surroundings, and he noted that the cause for his hangover was still curled up on his chest and dozing like a cat.

Unable to stop himself, Thomas finger-combed Newt’s hair so that he could look at his peaceful face.

“Now I’d quite like to dream together, if you don’t mind.”

What did that even mean.

He knew what he wanted it to mean, or what he thought he wanted it to mean. But considering 24 hours ago Thomas had still been under the impression that Newt wasn’t even interested in men, he might want to slow down a little bit. They’d talked about a lot of heavy shit before crying themselves to sleep—that wasn’t exactly what you might consider a romantic overture.

He had no idea what time it was, all he knew was that he desperately needed to shower and use the restroom. And maybe, if he was lucky, put something in his stomach that wasn’t whiskey. Not necessarily all in that order.

Despite Newt’s height he was surprisingly easy for Thomas to manipulate off of himself and onto the
sofa, where he tucked Newt in with the afghan that rested in the basket on the floor. He allowed himself a moment to smile at the sight of Newt asleep with a smile on his face, curled up in the same way he’d always slept when they were kids, before he found his way to the bathroom.

A long, hot shower and brushing the fuzz off his teeth went a long way towards clearing his head—using Newt’s shampoo and body wash did just as good a job of clearing his head as it did fogging it right back up. But he couldn’t help it. Or, he could but he hadn’t wanted to.

He debated with himself while he got dressed, chasing the idea that it was entirely possible Newt was interested. He wanted to share their dreams, that indicated a certain amount of interest, didn’t it? And Sunny had mentioned the one-night stands, so clearly Newt had at least been with men before… right? So excusing the fact that they hadn’t seen each other in 8 years, judging by Thomas’s own reaction the moment he’d seen him again, that didn’t negate the potential for attraction.

If he was being honest with himself, he’d been attracted to Newt long before he’d seen him in the flesh as an adult. Now all he knew was that Newt had grown up and grown up well. So it was entirely possible, if not plausible, that Newt was in the same boat.

“Now I’d quite like to dream together, if you don’t mind.”

Newt had called him home after so long, and Thomas had come.

That had to mean something.

Right?

Thomas followed that train of thought all the way back to Newt’s bedroom, where he stared dazedly once again at the pictures and paintings on the walls.

They went well with the room, which was painted a dark blue that spoke to Thomas of the deep places in the ocean, and it fit. Thomas could easily imagine Newt sitting in the chair by the window with his guitar in hand absentmindedly playing, or curled over his computer desk punching wildly at the keys to keep them all alive, or lying in bed at staring at the ceiling in the hopes that the swirls of color up above would chase the darkness away.

He had no idea how long he wandered that room and caught glimpses of Newt’s life, but evidently it was long enough for Newt to awaken and shower himself. Thomas was amazed that he hadn’t heard the shower, maybe he’d used Sonya’s and started it while Thomas was still in his own, but somehow he had.

Newt leaned against his doorway and watched Thomas from underneath wet fringes of hair, the look on his face unreadable.

Thomas found it hard to swallow all of a sudden.

He also found it hard to breathe when a moment later Newt pushed himself out of the doorway and his bare feet padded over to his closet, eyes on Thomas all the while. When Newt lifted his shirt off his head—only then did Thomas realize that Newt had had to put on the same clothes he’d worn last night or risk walking naked back to his bedroom—Thomas cleared his throat and fled the room.

He busied himself in the kitchen gathering supplies needed for omelets and allowed the familiar motions of cooking to try and gather his wits. Thomas kept his gaze focused on the stove in front of him and ignored the presence to his right, which was once again leaning on something in a way that drove Thomas to distraction, until he had no choice but to turn and put the first omelet on a plate. When he did turn and caught the look on his face Thomas couldn’t help but stop and glare.
Bastard was smirking.

“Shut up and eat your damn omelet,” Thomas grunted out. Newt’s smirk turned into an all-out grin, but he dutifully reached out and took his plate. There was a rather deliberate sniff when he walked by Thomas on his way to the table, and Thomas felt himself brace for the comment he knew was sure to follow.

“Nice shampoo,” Newt teased lightly.

Thomas made his voice drop low before he responded in kind.

“Thanks, I thought it smelled delicious.”

Newt’s cheeks pinked and his grip on his plate shifted ever so slightly and Thomas kept his smirk all the way through the end of a near silent breakfast.

They were still dancing around each other, to what end Thomas still wasn’t sure, when the door slammed open and the horde descended—led by a tiny blonde who practically flew in his direction.

Thomas had barely had time to stand and brace himself before he was lifting Sonya up above his head and spinning her as quickly as he could. She cackled madly, and Thomas’s shoulder muscles screamed so badly he had to bring her back down, but he was pleased that he could still manage what he’d done when they were kids.

They were both still laughing when she smacked him, and Thomas pretended that it hurt more than it actually had. “Don’t you dare wait that long before you come home again, you hear me? I don’t think I could ever forgive you.”

Thomas reached out and ruffled her perfectly styled hair before he responded.

“Promise. I missed you too, Sunny.”

“Alright, alright,” said a large and booming voice that belonged to the gargantuan man that lumbered towards him. “Stop hoggin’ him.”

“Alby what are they feeding you, horse feed?!”

Alby’s hug was crushing and lifted Thomas completely off of his feet.

“Didn’t he say he’d gotten bigger?” Gally interrupted. “Ben, I swear this slinthead said he’d gotten bigger.”

“Clearly he lied,” Ben agreed. “I think except for Zart and Sunny he’s the smallest one here.”

Alby put Thomas down, and he looked up… and up… and up… into the smiling faces of Ben and Gally. They were well matched and shared each other’s space easily, like they catered their every movement to each other. They even hugged him in sync, and Thomas couldn’t help but be happy for them.

“I told him when I saw him that the warm weather and sunshine stunted his growth,” Minho drawled. “Shank didn’t believe me.”

“Nah,” Zart disagreed, materializing out from behind Frypan to beat Minho to the hug. “He just hasn’t had the pleasure of eating all Frypan’s cooking.”

“What’s your excuse then? You eat more of my cookin’ than anyone else,” said Frypan who then
took his turn in the game of ‘pass Thomas’ that was clearly being played.

Thomas didn’t mind one bit.

“Well that’s easy, see, I gotta stay close to the ground to talk to my plants.”

A girl Thomas hadn’t met before, who could only be Harriet, snorted from near the door. Thomas’s inspection of her was interrupted by being pulled in close to Minho and having his back patted for the umpteenth time that morning.


Harriet tried to go in for a handshake, but Thomas was having none of that. Hugs or bust and judging from the small smile he’d detected in Harriet’s eyes he’d made the right choice.

When they’d all greeted him and Thomas was left standing and staring at all the faces of his past, he found himself uncertain of where he fit into place with them. They looked so comfortable together, so sure, and Thomas wasn’t even sure of who he should sit next to. He opened his mouth a few times to speak but found he’d no idea what to say and so closed it again. They all stared at him, amused, but Thomas caught Newt’s gaze fixed on him and found understanding waiting there.

Of course Newt would understand.

“C’mon then, he’s not a buggin’ exhibit,” Newt drawled. “If you’re gonna invade my home you might as well entertain us. Who ended up winning that argument last night?”

Attention immediately shifted to Newt and Thomas was able to relax. The group also began to migrate to the living room, and Newt dragged Thomas along and sat them down together before Thomas had the chance to make it awkward.

“You mean the one you ran away from and did what you wanted anyway?” Minho grumbled.

“That’s the one.”

“They were still arguing about it when you texted Minho that Thomas passed out,” Alby said. “They didn’t even notice you left.”

“Hey!”

“Traitor!”

Thomas lost himself in their banter and the stories that followed easily; he relaxed into Newt’s side as though he’d never left it and tried not to think about how terrifying it was that he never wanted to leave.

They didn’t have a single moment alone after that for the next four days. Newt was instructed to pack a bag and both of them were carted off to the large townhouse that Minho, Ben, and Gally all shared together and trapped there. Not that Thomas minded, not really. Everyone was staying there, and they were up late talking every night regaining their equilibrium together, each sharing stories that were better told in person than over text or the phone.

Through it all, Thomas watched Newt.
And Newt watched Thomas.

There were several small interactions that played on a loop in Thomas’s mind; extra touches that weren’t strictly necessary, a lingering gaze when no one else was looking, Newt wiping a drop of hot chocolate off of Thomas’s mouth with a shy smile and guarded eyes.

Things came to a head on Christmas Eve, when Newt brought out his violin and a hush immediately befell their rowdy group.

Newt didn’t say anything, he didn’t need to. In fact he ignored the whispers happening behind him while he plucked at the strings and made a few adjustments.

Thomas thought he was going to have a heart attack.

“He’s never played for us before,” Minho whispered in Thomas’s ear.

Thomas jerked to look at him in surprise.

“Well, we’ve heard him in his concerts and on CD’s…” Gally elaborated.

“But never in person, one-on-one like this,” Ben finished.

Thomas looked at Newt with new eyes and saw the slight shake of his hands, the tightness in his mouth, and the way he homed in on his task like he hoped if he did that long enough, he could pretend that they all weren’t there watching.

After a quick glance around the room to locate what he wanted, Thomas casually wandered over to the dimmer switch on the wall. Slowly he turned it to the lowest setting and watched some of the tension ease between Newt’s shoulder blades while the room faded mostly into the shadow. Newt glanced up at Thomas briefly and the weight of the gratitude written on his face warmed Thomas from the inside out.

But that was nothing compared to what happened when Newt finally dragged his bow across the strings in a haunting note that made Thomas gasp aloud.

When Newt played, every line of his being danced to life. He ensnared the room and held it completely in his grasp, his body relaxed and allowed the music to do his speaking for him. The tune was festive and cheery at first, full of wonder, before it shifted to something dark and somber. The notes began to quiver, and the sound became almost delicate and brittle before a harsh strike of the bow ended them abruptly. It wasn’t until the salt on his cheeks fell away to the floor and a single, pure, note followed the brittle end with a notion of hope that Thomas’s breath caught in realization.

Newt was telling them all his story.

Sunny came up and held Thomas’s hand with tears in her eyes and a smile on her face—an expression shared by most all in the room—and Thomas returned his focus to Newt.

His eyes were wide open, and they locked on Thomas during the song’s upward crescendo of emotion. The piece picked up it’s pace once again and turned to something sweet and lilting; Newt’s eyes sparkled, and Thomas couldn’t help but mouth a single word to him,

“Magic.”

Newt’s smile was something Thomas would carry with him for the rest of his life.
The song ended quickly, too quickly, and for a moment it seemed like no one wanted to break the hush that had fallen over them. And then Sonya cheered and carefully tackled her brother and the room responded in kind. They praised, they surreptitiously wiped their faces, and pestered Newt with innocent enough questions to try and wrangle him into playing for them more often until Newt escaped on the excuse of needing to cool down.

Thomas waited maybe two minutes before he followed, coats in hand. He ignored the knowing glances he left behind.

Newt stood at the end of the patio, eyes closed, face upturned to the snow that gathered on his lashes. He looked freer, somehow, than he had before. Like he’d finally accomplished what he’d needed to do, some task he’d set himself.

And maybe he had.

“See something you like?” Newt asked without opening his eyes. The chill that trickled down Thomas’s spine had nothing to do with the cold.

Thomas carefully made his way over the snow to drape Newt’s coat over his shoulders before he answered.

“Yes.”

He’d spoken quietly, but in the silence brought on by the snowfall it may as well have been a shout. His heart thundered in his chest in anticipation; Newt smiled and put his coat on properly. When he opened his eyes there was a question in them, and it wasn’t the one he voiced aloud.

“D’you want to make snow angels with me?”

Thomas answered the question in Newt’s eyes with a kiss.

Newt kissed with his whole body; he framed Thomas’s face with his hands, he arched his back into Thomas’s touch against his back, and he slotted their legs together as best he could with them having nothing to lean on. He tasted sweet, like the hot chocolate and candy canes they’d all been eating before Thomas’s life changed forever.

When eventually they pulled apart it was only to rest their foreheads together and catch their breath.

“I have wanted to do that for an embarrassingly long time,” Newt confessed.

Thomas didn’t even try to keep back his laughter.

“The first time I met you I called you pretty and said I thought you were made of magic, I think I’ve got you beat,” Thomas countered. “Although I had no idea what I meant by it all at the time.”

“Oh, trust me. I remember.”

Newt accentuated his point with a soft kiss to Thomas’s forehead.

“Now what?” Thomas asked, for once eager for the answer.

“Share your dreams with me?” Newt asked quietly.

“I always have.”

Newt leaned down to kiss him again, and as his watch beeped midnight, Thomas brought in
Christmas with kisses, snow angels, and laughter.

Part V
Christmas, 24 years old

[BumbleBee]: this is taking longer than it was supposed to

[Legoman]: less talking, more running

[Greenie]: where is the fucking flag

[Greenie]: all we have to do is grab the flag and make it back this shouldn’t be this complicated

[Frypan]: mage up ahead, just got morphed

[Greenie]: ffs

[Griffon]: we are def gonna be late

[LizardKing]: we can’t be late, not like it can start without us

[LizardKing]: sunnys been trying to knock down the bloody door

[Griffon]: I think it’s Aris and Chuck at ours

[Zorro]: THOMAS WHAT ARE YOU DOING

[Greenie]: IT WAS AN ACCIDENT

[LizardKing]: don’t type you idiot, run!

[Magneato]: how did that happen we had a PLAN and that plan was NOT for the slowest character to get the shucking flag

[Magneato]: I can’t even help, I’m rooted!

[BumbleBee]: then go tell everyone to calm down this will be over soon

[Magneato]: I swear to god if any more of you slinheads try to get married on a Tuesday I will personally kick your ass

[Magneato has logged off]

[Frypan]: I think its kind of sweet
[Griffon]: that’s only cause they asked you to cook

[Frypan]: at least SOMEONE thought to

[BumbleBee]: you’ve met my mother, that would not have ended well

[Zorro]: so far, I’m 2 for 2 on providing flowers

[Greenie]: jfc newt keep up with the heals or we are gonna wipe

[LizardKing]: slim it and run you pillock

[Legoman]: such love, it’s so beautiful

[Legoman]: brings a tear to my eye

[Zorro]: you sure it’s not that life steal?

[Legoman]: slim it

[Griffon]: GO GO GO

[BumbleBee]: okay team up on the bridge, if we all drop AOE at the same time we might buy Thomas enough time to hit the point

[Greenie]: please anything. we can’t wipe today, it’s not allowed.

[LizardKing]: RUN

[Legoman]: ready?

[Griffon]: drop when the druid hits the first bit of the bridge

[BumbleBee]: WOOOOOOOO

[Zorro]: why are you cheering we all died

[BumbleBee]: okay but so did they

[Griffon]: down to you two idiots

[Frypan]: god help us all

[LizardKing]: tommy so help me god if you don’t stay in range

[Greenie]: do you want me to run or to stay in range make up your shucking mind

[LizardKing]: BOTH. MULTITASK.

[Legoman]: I don’t wanna hear about you multitasking

[Griffon]: ignore him, feel free to elaborate

[BumbleBee]: yeah, we have Theories
[LizardKing]: oh bloody hell not in the water

[Greenie]: I can see the point ahead

[LizardKing]: I’m gonna have to stop and fight or you’re not gonna reach it

[Zorro]: fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

[BumbleBee]: you got this

[LizardKing]: gonna give you all I’ve got and then you run like hell

[Greenie]: what else would I do?!

[LizardKing]: GO

[Frypan]: I can’t watch this

[Zorro]: he’s not gonna make it

[BumbleBee]: he’s totally gonna make it

[Griffon]: your boy just died for you, make it count

[LizardKing]: c’mon love, don’t die

[BumbleBee]: YES

[Griffon]: FUCK YEAH

[Legoman]: thank god

[Greenie]: you shanks have no faith I swear

[Zorro]: shut up and go get married

[Zorro has logged off]

[Frypan]: good run, I like it. see you out there.

[Frypan has logged off]

[LizardKing]: knew you had it in you

[Legoman]: stop flirting and get out there

[Legoman has logged off]

[BumbleBee has logged off]

[Griffon]: careful not to trip

[Griffon has logged off]
[Greenie]: Newt?

[LizardKing]: ?

[Greenie]: I love you.

[LizardKing]: I love you too.

[LizardKing]: see you in a bit!

[LizardKing has logged off]

[Greenie has logged off]

There had been some debate among the group about whether or not talking in guild chat counted as talking to the groom on wedding day… eventually they decided that their own traditions were more important than standard wedding procedure.

Their families and friends didn’t appear to be amused, but the grins shared by the men of wedding party were more than worth the glares from Sunny and Harriet.

It started snowing right as Thomas walked out to await Newt at the altar, just like magic.

The whole tent they were in was a winter wonderland with fairy lights, crystals, and white lilies paired with evergreen. Zart had done a magnificent job on everything. Thomas shouldn’t have been nervous, there was no need to be, but he was marrying his best friend. That was big.

Marriage.

To Newt.

It felt so right, like Thomas had been asleep his entire life and now it was time to wake up, to live his real life, with Newt.

“Whoa,” Ben whispered.

Thomas’s head jerked up right when the music started playing; it was Track 8 from the first CD that Newt had ever made for him, and hearing it eased his nerves just in time for his heart to stop beating in his chest.

If their tent was a winter wonderland, Newt was its Prince.

“Breathe,” he heard Ben say. “You’re not allowed to pass out right now.”

Newt wore white and silver, with dark blue accents that came from his bowtie and shining cufflinks. The snow from outside had stuck in his hair and not melted yet, and the uneven lighting from the fairy lights had his pinked skin glowing. His eyes were warm and sparked to life when they met Thomas’s own; Thomas couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

Newt was, in that moment, absolutely everything Thomas loved about the world.

He had to bite the inside of his cheek to keep the emotion from spilling out of his eyes.
Newt’s smile was soft and sure when his mother gave him away at the altar, Thomas could see Sunny vibrate with glee behind him.

“Dearly Beloved,” Minho’s voice rang out loud and clear, and only a little smug. Thomas and Newt were told that they needn’t know the dirty politics involved in determining who would be the officiant, only that Minho had won. “We are gathered here today to celebrate the marriage of Newton Issacs and Thomas Greene, two men I’ve had the distinct pleasure of growing up alongside. Our group of friends has survived a lot over the past 16 years: tragedy, growth, distance, and love. We have all seen each other at our very best and our very worst, and because of this I can say that I’ve never seen two people who more perfectly balance each other out than Newt and Thomas.

“They light each other up, push each other to new lengths, but above all else they wholeheartedly support each other and their dreams. Watching them fall in love week by week has made me a believer of true love and soul mates, and it is because of that that I am honored to unite them here today.

“Thomas, Newt. You’re both already married to each other, tied to each other, by your love and life experiences—last thing to do is make it official. Do you have the rings?”

Thomas reached behind for the ring that Ben passed to him, unwilling to allow his eyes to leave Newt’s for even that long. There was a giddiness there now, a slight disbelief that Thomas couldn’t wait to kiss away.

“Thomas, would you like to say your vows?” Minho asked.

Thomas didn’t know if he could speak; he cleared his throat twice before the words would come.

“Newt, from the moment I first saw you I thought you were magic. These past 16 years getting to know you have done nothing to rid me of my suspicion—there seems like there’s no possible way someone like you could exist. There’s no way I could be that lucky; or at least that’s what I thought. Magic or not, you’ve somehow chosen to spend the rest of your life with me and I could not be more grateful. I can’t promise to always be perfect, or to get everything right the first time, but I promise that I will never stop trying. I promise to listen, even when you’re not speaking, and to hold you when things get dark. I promise to love you as long as you will let me, if you’ll have me.”

He’d tripped over a few words, but the light in Newt’s eyes was enough to make Thomas unafraid.

“Newt, would you like to say your vows?”

Newt nodded and fumbled for the piece of paper Sunny passed him. He took a steadying breath and when he spoke his voice was music to Thomas’s ears.

“Tommy, from the moment you showed up in my front yard and turned my life upside-down I knew I would follow you anywhere. And I have. You told me, back then, that you were going to change my life. What you didn’t realize was that you already had. You gave me light and happiness and friends and that stupid game we’ve allowed ourselves to become obsessed with; and I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world. You make life worth it, Tommy. I will follow you to the ends of the earth if only you’ll let me come along; I promise to make you smile, to share with you the music you’ve ignited inside me, and to spend every last second of my time in this world ensuring that you understand exactly how cherished you are, so long as you agree to take me with you.”

Thomas did not give a care in the world if people saw that he cried; he was nodding and itched to exchange rings and claim that man for all to see.
“Do you, Thomas, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband? To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, as long as you both shall live?”

“I do,” Thomas said, for once without a single tremor in his voice.

His hand tingled more at the sensation of Newt’s skin against his own than at the addition of the cool metal on his finger.

“Do you, Newt, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband? To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, as long as you both shall live?”

“I do,” Newt said.

Thomas felt like he could fly and grinned so hard his cheeks ached when he slid the ring onto Newt’s finger at last.

“Then, by the power vested in me by the state of New York and the Maze Runner’s Guild, and before these witnesses, I hereby pronounce you bound in holy matrimony. Gentlemen, you may now seal this union with a kiss.”

Thomas lost himself in Newt’s lips so quickly and thoroughly that it wasn’t until much later that he realized what exactly Minho had said. Luckily for him, he and Newt were too busy dancing to care.

They spent their first Christmas as a married couple in igloos, much the same way their first Christmas as children had been. They’d enjoyed themselves in the snow all day: made snow angels and sipped on their hot chocolates. And at night, when they collapsed together sated and glowing, they watched the Northern Lights through their ceiling and allowed the dancing colors in the heavens to lull them to sleep.

Fin.

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading this story and giving it a chance! It's out of my comfort zone in a lot of ways, but it was a labor of love and I hope it showed.

I got into a few tough topics, namely suicide. In a work of fiction it's easy to simplify problems and find solutions and make recovery seem like it's as easy as breathing. It's not, always. In real life not everything can be tied up with a neat little bow--so don't think that your problems, if you have them, are too much for you to handle. You, dear reader, are loved and cherished. Know this.

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self harm, please reach out to someone around
you. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline always has people who are willing to talk: 1-800-273-8255.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!