Summary

"The bastard probably only told Freddie, who used whatever wormhole Doctor Brian May discovered to go to the future to find an unconventionally handsome burgeoning actor to groom as the perfect person to play his fabulous self."

Freddie's trip into the future in three parts:

- Part I: When Rami met Freddie
- Part II: Freddie Reconnects with the Mothership
- Part III: Queen Watch *Bohemian Rhapsody*

A prequel-sequel mashup to *Don't You Hear My Call*. You should go ahead and read that first if you haven't already.

Notes

Disclaimer: This was written with great admiration and respect for the real people I use as characters in this story. It's just my crazy little fantasy.

Also, all lyrics are by Queen, of course.
Part I: When Rami Met Freddie

While Rami can afford to take a flight home for the rare weeklong break in production of “Mr. Robot,” it seemed unnecessary. After all, there are only a few more episodes of the season to shoot before he returns home.

The first season’s success was such a surprise, and the awards attention for his acting was even more surprising. Rami’s confident in his abilities but humble enough to be shocked by the accolades after years of small roles and inconsistent income.

It’s all just so new, making any break intolerable. He can’t shake the need to be constantly searching for the next job.

He also can’t shake the feeling he’s being watched at the moment.

Having paparazzi follow him is also a new thing. Privacy is important, sure, and if he lived a more interesting personal life, he’d probably be more annoyed. Instead, Rami finds himself oddly zen about the mundane pictures floating around of him scarfing down his lunch or looking puzzled by a stupid parking meter.

This feeling of being watched is different though. More significant, if that makes sense. Rami can almost feel a weight from it.

He stops walking abruptly and turns completely around. Yep, there’s someone a few feet away who stops just as suddenly as Rami did once he’s noticed. The man is wearing a nice bomber jacket, well-worn jeans, a ball cap and aviators. The perfect stalking outfit, Rami inexplicably muses. The only feature that would make you look twice is the throwback mustache he’s rocking.

The man doesn’t seem flustered one bit by getting caught. Instead, he gives a small, closed-mouth smile and slowly walks toward Rami.

What do I do? Is he a crazy stalker? Don’t be so dramatic! Playing Elliot has made you so paranoid. He probably just wants an autograph or selfie. But why isn’t he saying anything? Jesus, Rami, fight or flight, man! Whoops, too late. He’s close enough to stab you now. Well, at least he smells nice.

Rami swallows the lump in his throat hard. “Can ... can I, uh, help you?” He ends the query in a higher pitch than he’d like to believe was possible.

An eyebrow arches above the man’s sunglasses. He takes a long, exaggerated look up and down Rami’s body, returning to look him straight in the face. The small smile is quite big now. “I do believe you can, darling.”

As freaked out as he is, Rami can’t help but take notice of the man’s voice. How can someone make such a short sentence sound so melodic?

Suddenly, the bright smile dims, hiding the man’s unique teeth and closing off any chance to hear more of the lovely voice. The man gives a curt nod to Rami, pulls the brim of his cap lower, puts his hands in his jacket pockets, and walks off without another word.

Rami stares at the diminishing figure until he turns off the sidewalk, out of sight.
Lunchtime around the set isn’t usually a solitary time. This Monday felt different though. Rami took off as quickly as possible after the morning table reading to his trailer, away from a public space.

Rami couldn’t shake the odd mix of emotions from his encounter last week with the stranger. The intangible weight from the man’s attention stayed with him despite not having any other incidents.

He nestles into his comfy chair with a can of mixed nuts as his only lunch and starts checking his email when the most insistent knocking he’s had the displeasure of hearing comes from his door.

“Okay! I’m coming,” asshole, Rami adds under his breath.

As soon as he turns the knob, someone cracks the door back and squeezes inside, Rami barely able to back away.

“What the hell!” Before Rami can ask the intruder who he is, the man turns, and shit, it’s mustache stranger. He recoils as far as he can in the small space. “No fucking way, asshole! I will scream for security. You’re insane if you think they won’t immediately storm in here to save the star of a basic cable TV show!”

Despite the threat, the man gives no immediate response. He simply stares at Rami with a bemused, put-upon expression. As if Rami were an adorable kitten who got caught tearing up yet another throw pillow.

“So dramatic, Rami dear,” the man says. “You will do nicely.”

“Do what?!” because, damn it, what is going on?! “Who are you?!”

“Calm down, sweetheart. There’s only room in this trailer for one hysterical queen, and it’s not you … yet.”

“Okay, yeah. I’m getting security.”

The man puts his hands on his hips, thus blocking the door further, and heaves a sigh. He dramatically takes off the aviator sunglasses.

What th-, uh, ohhkay. Rami blinks a few times. Well, that explains the mustache. “Look, Freddie Mercury, I will honest and truly tackle you to get through this door if you don’t start explaining yourself.”

That seems to only please the stranger, an unguarded smile lighting his face. “I want to cast you in my movie.”

“Excuse me?”

“Well, I’m not actually making the movie, but it is about me and Queen.”

“There’s a movie about Queen being made?”

“Yes. Has been for quite some time now. It’s at a crossroads at the moment. If the filmmakers don’t find the perfect person to play me, the project might be lost.”

“And you think I’m the perfect person to play you?” Oh, God, Rami can’t believe he’s actually indulging a possible psycho who has him trapped in his trailer.

“No, honestly.”
The blunt response triggers a mental record scratch. “What do you mean no?” Rami crosses his arms in indignation. “I won a freaking Emmy!”

“Oh, shush, darling. I’m not questioning your talent. You’re not perfect for the role, but you definitely have the most potential to become so. From what I’ve observed, you’re hungry for the next big opportunity. The sort of role that will challenge you and almost change you. It needs to be a personality that on the surface seems like your polar opposite, and yet you’ll be able to better understand yourself somehow because there’s a core of humanity and complexity that you share with the person.”

Confident that he has Rami transfixed, the man moves away from the door and sits in the comfy chair Rami had just vacated. “Darling, I have sold an infinite number of records around the world, I have performed to an audience of 1 billion all at once, I have several great loves in my life, and I have essentially accomplished every goal I have ever set for myself. Can you say that you’ve done the same in your personal and professional life?”

Rami doesn’t even have to ponder an answer. “No,” he says, then pauses and adds, “honestly,” echoing “Freddie’s” blunt response to him earlier.

The small, closed-mouth smile returns. “I can help you along with some of that.”

“Really?” he asks, soaking the word in skepticism.

The man leans forward like he’s telling a secret and doesn’t blink when he says, “Sweetheart, I am the role of a lifetime.”

Rami scoffs. That’s it. Enough. “Let’s just get this out of the way. There is no way you are Freddie fucking Mercury.”

The man rolls his eyes and waves a hand dismissively. “Very well. What shall I do to prove that I am indeed Freddie fucking Mercury?”

And the answer’s pretty simple. “Sing.”

The man enthusiastically bounces back up before Rami. “Any requests?” he asks, full of mischief.

Oh, shit. What should he ask for? Rami knows some of Queen's big hits like, of course, “Bohemian Rhapsody,” but that’s too obvious to ask for. Why does he care that it’s obvious? Because, Rami realizes, he’s developing an uneasy, growing need to not insult this man who, sure, is definitely not Freddie Mercury but does a superb impersonation. Why isn’t he trying to get the role? Ugh, focus, Rami. How about “We Will Rock You”? No, then he’ll want to join in with the stomping and clapping, and he’ll embarrass himself. “Somebody to Love”? Nope, too romantic. Definitely not the situation for that. Think, think, think. Just pick something!

“ ‘You’re My Best Friend’!”

The biggest smile splits the man’s face. “Oh, darling. That’s nice of you, but we hardly know each other. You’re moving awfully fast.”

Rami scrunches his face in complete confusion.

“Ha, just joking, of course. You’re laughing on the inside, I’m sure of it. Very nice choice. A Deacy classic.”

“What’s a Deacy?”
“Freddie” gasps. “What’s a Deacy?!” He shakes his head in dismay. “We’ll have to address the glaring holes in your Queen knowledge later. For now, sit and enjoy the free show.”

Rami warily sits back in the comfy chair. He tries not to be in awe already, but it’s a close thing. The guy just looks so much like the legendary singer.

“Freddie” takes in a slow, deep breath.

_Ooh you make me live_  
_Whatever this world can give to me …_

Without the familiar peppy music, Rami is able to focus on the lyrics better. He had forgotten how much sappy sentiment was in the song.

_... Ooh I've been wandering round_  
_But I still come back to you_  
_In rain or shine_  
_You've stood by me girl …_

Good grief, It’s so heartfelt and sweet.

_... I'm happy at home_  
_You're my best friend_  
_Oh you're my best friend_  
_Ooh you make me live_  
_You're my best friend_

What a fucking beautiful song.

And Freddie’s voice was so fluid yet strong. The song wasn’t a true test of his range though. Maybe Rami really should ask Freddie to sing “Bohemian Rhapsody” next. Or “Crazy Little Thing Called Love.” That’d be a fun one and …

“OH MY GOD, YOU REALLY ARE FREDDIE FUCKING MERCURY!!!”

Freddie rolls his eyes at the actor once more. “Of course, darling,” he says, drolly.

“Holy shit, the ghost of Freddie Mercury is in my trailer,” Rami says in amazement.

Freddie chuckles. “Nothing so macabre, my dear.”

“Then how?!?” because, again, _holy shit!_

Freddie, completely straight-faced: “Time travel.”

For some unfathomable reason, Rami finds that explanation harder to believe than ghost.

Before Rami can vocalize his reservations, someone knocks on the trailer. “Rami! 10 minutes!”

“Oh, okay, Stephanie!” Rami says quickly enough so she won’t try to come into the trailer for some reason. “Thanks!”

“Are you listening to Queen?” she shout-asks through the trailer walls.

Rami looks at Freddie, who, of course, is smug and completely entertained by the whole situation. “Uh, sure am!”
“Niiice,” Stephanie drawls. “I’m serious, Rami. You got 9 minutes now!”

Rami keeps looking at Freddie, a hard, truth-seeking stare. The singer’s grin dims under the scrutiny, cheeks getting pink. If Rami didn’t know any better, he’d think Freddie was getting self-conscious and bashful from the attention.

“My dear, I believe that was my cue to leave.”

What?! “No, you can’t leave! You just got here! I can tell them I feel sick. Or I have a family emergency. Or I died. I’ll tell them anything. You can’t go. Stay with me.”

Freddie looks very touched by Rami’s earnest pleas (he’s still blushing). “Don’t fret like that. I’ll see you later tonight after you’re done with work.”

“How? Where?”

“If I may be so bold, I’m inviting myself up to your flat.”

“Oh, sure, yeah,” Rami tries not to be flustered with the idea of the dead-but-not-dead legend in his apartment, “let me give you my address.”

“No need, darling. I’ll find you.”

“But—”

Freddie places a finger on Rami’s lips. “No more questions for now. You’re down to 5 minutes to get back to work. Stephanie will be quite put out if you’re late, and I wouldn’t dream of being the cause of her distress.” He puts his aviators back on. “All will be revealed tonight.”

Rami can’t help but fear that he might not see Freddie again. “You promise?”

Freddie opens the door but stays turned toward him. “Oh, Rami dear, you do have much to learn about me before you can portray me. Of course, I promise. Wouldn’t dream of missing a date with a gorgeous gentleman.”

Before Rami has a chance to respond, Freddie ducks just as quickly out of the trailer as he came in. The door shuts with a soft thud.

The sudden silence is heartbreaking.

Mondays on TV show sets are pretty predictable with no need usually to be around in the evening, unlike the rest of the week when filming actually takes place and night shoots are a possibility. That meant Rami could split immediately at 6 without hassle.

Not that anyone could have kept Rami from leaving that night. He wasn’t about to keep Freddie Mercury waiting, after all.

He does a clean sweep of his apartment, his kitchen being the part in most need of straightening and spraying down. In the process, Rami realizes he should think about dinner. What do rock legends eat?

Before he can open his fridge to scrutinize its contents, a knock comes from his door. “Who is it?”

“Who do you think, darling?”
Rami opens the entrance immediately. “How did you get up here without checking in at the front?”

Freddie breezes by Rami without waiting for permission to come in. “I could sweet talk my way into the Vatican. Your building’s security was hardly a challenge. Mr. Jacobs is a lovely man. Did you know he just had his third child? Showed me photos on one of those devices I see everyone carrying in this time. She looks like a gargoyle, but, of course, I didn’t tell him that.”

*She does look like a gargoyle,* Rami silently agrees. “Where did you go this afternoon? Or even this past week, where have you been?”

“What makes you think I’ve only been here a week?” Freddie says, smirking. He throws his coat on the sofa despite his obvious displeasure with the furniture. “Rami dear, why is your living room so … unlived?”

“What does that even mean?”

“Borrrring, darling.”

“I just stay here for the TV show.”

“You don’t even have a cat,” Freddie laments. “What kind of home doesn’t have a cat?”

Rami shrugs. He’s not opposed to cats as a concept but never actually considered ownership. A tabby might be sweet to have. Wait, no. He’s getting distracted. “Freddie,” he starts, then deflates when faced with the enormity and multitude of things needing to be addressed. He settles on vague hand gestures at Freddie, then himself, then the cosmos, he supposes.

The singer takes pity. “No sense in putting off your education. Queen: Lesson 1 is in session. Please have a seat on your dull couch, and we can begin.”

Rami sighs and does as he’s told.

“Now, I’ve already informed you of my confidence in your ability to portray me, but you still need a good foundation of knowledge. I can’t guarantee you the job. However, I can guarantee you a foot in the door. The rest will be in your hands. You must absolutely own the role of Freddie Mercury.”

“You can get me a meeting with the producers?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Why do you worry over such unimportant details? Trust me. You will get a call. For now, focus on getting to know me and my band.”

Rami gives a shy smile. “I’d like that.”

“All right, let’s start with the mothership. Queen is Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor, and John Deacon, and they play rock ‘n’ roll.”

“You don’t say,” he says, full of sass.

“Hush now. Be useful and turn on your computer.”

Rami opens his laptop and jabs the keys a few times to get it out of sleep mode. “Freddie, you said
“1987. A few short months after our biggest, most glorious tour yet. But you’re making me get ahead of things.”

“I’m just curious because you seem quite blasé about the technology of today.” Rami waves at his laptop and iPhone, as if to say, “For example.”

“Only because it’s all so unexceptional. Oh, computers and cellular phones are smaller now? How grand,” Freddie says, dry as a desert. “Where are the flying cars or teleporters?”

“True,” Rami concedes.

“I bet John’s having a grand ol’ time these days. He was the electronics wizard.” Freddie claps his hands together. “Which directs me back to our lesson. Look up John Deacon, dear.”

Rami does as told, a search returning photos of an affable-looking man whose hairstyles seem to go all over the place.

Freddie takes a look at the screen and smiles brightly. “That, my dear Rami, is a Deacy. John plays bass guitar superbly and is the secret weapon of Queen. The writer of such hits as ‘You’re My Best Friend,’ ‘Another One Bites the Dust,’ and ‘I Want to Break Free.’ A sensitive soul who can tear up a dance floor. Not to be trifled with and should be shown great respect, always. He is a legend.”

Rami nods solemnly. “Got it. A geeky, dancing legend.”

Freddie looks ready to argue his oversimplified description of John. On second thought, “I suppose that’s fairly accurate,” he concedes.

“So, quick question. Kind of a follow-up on the whole time-travel thing.” Rami pauses to get the wording for his question just right. He takes in a deep breath. “Uh, how?”

“Look up Brian May.”

Rami does so without delay, assuming Freddie is blowing off his question.

“Now, I know your first thoughts are going to be, ‘Tall, curly hair, plays guitar.’ But you’d be wrong. Brian is the scariest human being to ever walk this planet.”

That can’t be right. One picture in particular of him joyously holding a hedgehog directly contradicts that statement.

“He created the device that allowed me to travel here.”

“He did that? The guitarist?”

“Darling, along with being one of the most amazing guitarists of all time and writer of the most heartbreaking, challenging, and life-affirming lyrics I’ve ever had the pleasure of singing, the man is an astrophysicist.”

“Fuck.” That’s all Rami can eloquently say to that.

“Fuck, indeed!” Freddie’s always been so proud of Brian. “Scary smart, a super genius, but luckily not an evil one. Infinitely kind.”

Rami can see that. Oh, look, Brian’s holding a wombat in this other picture. He’s tempted to do a
“Brian May holding animals” search. “I’d love to talk with him.”

“You will! I’m absolutely certain of it. And I can’t wait for you to meet Roger, the biggest member of them all — in his mind, at least.”

Rami goes ahead and searches for Roger Taylor without prompting. “Wow.”

“Gorgeous, isn’t he? And he knows it. Has the temperament of some mythical beast and plays the drums just as ferociously. Has the falsetto of angels.”

“Sounds like a fun guy.”

“That’s an understatement, darling. I’ve never had more fun with anyone else. Oh, the naughty things!”

“Got any details, you know, stuff that would help me get the part?” Rami asks, all false innocence.

Freddie doesn’t bite. “Perhaps another time.” He sits down next to Rami on the couch. “If you’re serious about really getting this role, then look up Farrokh Bulsara.”

Freddie types the name in for Rami. The results? All pictures of Freddie Mercury. It doesn’t take too long for Rami to equate everything.

“You’re not originally from England, are you?”

“No.” On the singer’s face is a small, sad smile. “I was born in Zanzibar, an island off the east coast of Africa. My family is Parsi. Spent much of my time growing up in India before I made it to England.” He looks the actor directly in his eyes, scrutinizes but not in his familiar flirty way. He seems to be assessing something. “Might I ask a bit of your family history, Mr. Rami Malek?”

Rami gives a crooked smile, understanding what Freddie’s trying to address. “My parents are from Egypt. I was born in Los Angeles. I’m Egyptian-American.”

It’s a simple, straight-forward answer, yet Freddie seems most pleased. “Excellent!” He excitedly gets up, dragging Rami with him. “Oh, Rami dear, I am so happy to have discovered you. Now, we must address other talents. Can you sing?”

“No.”

“You answered much too quickly. You work in the arts. There must have been some vocal training along the way.”

“Not much, honestly. The only opportunities I get to sing are in the shower.”

“Then let’s go into the shower, and you can show me all your talents.”

Freddie grabs a hand and starts tugging Rami. “What?! Freddie, no! We’re not going into the shower!”

The singer chuckles at Rami’s distress. “Oh, darling. I just want you to be comfortable enough to sing for me.”

Freddie keeps chuckling, and Rami realizes he’s not serious about the shower. “You’re having a great time, aren’t you?”

“I really am! You know, for someone who claims to not be able to sing, you certainly act like a
diva. Just sing a little something. Don’t worry so much about my opinion. You’ll find the worst critics are often ourselves.”


“Excellent choice, darling. Most times, the song gets sung to me at concerts anyway.”

“Okay, just that first part because that’s all I really know.” Rami clears his throat.

Love of my life, you've hurt me
You've broken my heart and now you leave me
Love of my life, can't you see?
Bring it back, bring it back
Don't take it away from me, because you don't know
What it means to me

Freddie has his palms laid against his chest, head slightly tilted, looking at Rami in a way that only could be interpreted as: “Well, an attempt was made.”

The singer rolls his eyes. “That is not what I’m thinking, dear.”

Crap, Rami said that out loud. “Crap, I said that out loud?”

“Yes, darling, you did. And you’re wrong to be so dismissive of your abilities. You have a charming, husky tenor voice. You do, however, need to work on your range.”

“Can I still play you?”

“Of course! The filmmakers wouldn’t make you sing with your voice. It has to be my singing for my music.”

“Then why did you have me sing?”

“I want you to be comfortable with the idea of being a performer of my caliber. I want you to feel capable of doing such things as singing.”

Okay, that makes sense. But, really, “I wasn’t that bad?”

Freddie chuckles again. “Your need for affirmation is adorable. Not bad at all, my dear.”

Rami releases a breath in relief and smiles big.

“Now, let’s see you dance.”

The smile completely disappears.

“Oh, my goodness, darling. Your face looks exactly how Roger’s did when I said ‘I’m In Love With My Car’ shouldn’t be the ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ B-side.”

Rami starts shaking a little.

“Darling, you mustn’t get so nervous about these things. You’re an actor! Pretending to know dance should be easy. I did it my whole career.”

“What do you mean?”
“I managed to convince a professional ballet company that I was a trained dancer. They just carried me around the stage when they realized the truth. I’m the great pretender when it comes to my moves onstage. I do what my body feels like doing with whatever I’m singing.”

Rami considers the scenario. “So, no real dancing?”

“No,” Freddie dryly assures, “but we’ll still need some music: ‘Don’t Stop Me Now’.”

“… I’m not,” Rami responds, confused.

“The song!” Freddie’s entirely too amused by the mistake. “Play the song.”

“Oh, right! I remember that one.” Rami pulls up the music video on YouTube.

“Now, this one doesn’t need anything fancy. Just bounce, clap, get into it, sing along.”

Freddie starts singing to his voice, basically serenading Rami before the faster rhythm kicks in.

_Tonight, I'm gonna have myself a real good time_
_I feel alive and the world I'll turn it inside out, yeah_
_And floating around in ecstasy_
_So don't stop me now don't stop me_
'_Cause I'm having a good time, having a good time …_

The singer starts bouncing and moving, spinning around Rami, who hasn’t worked up the nerve yet to join in.

When Freddie starts singing, “I wanna make a supersonic man out of you,” he points directly at Rami and grabs his hand.

They run around the apartment, singing at the top of their lungs. Freddie grabs a Swiffer broom and uses it as his half-mic stand, sharing the “mic” occasionally with Rami.

… _Don't stop me, don't stop me_
_Don't stop me, hey, hey, hey_
_Don't stop me, don't stop me_
_Ooh ooh ooh, I like it …_

At some point, Freddie arches so far back Rami genuinely worries for his spine. While Rami can’t quite manage that move yet, he shuffles and practically pirouettes a couple times, Freddie breaking lyrics with an acknowledging “Yeah!”

As the song nears its end, Rami and Freddie jump on the couch belting “I DON’T WANT TO STOP AT ALLLLLL!!”

They flop down to sitting positions and let Music Video Freddie take over the remaining “_La da da da daaah_”s that finish up the song.

They’re laughing and catching their breaths. Rami is looking at the laptop screen as YouTube counts down to the next video to autoplay: “These Are the Days of Our Lives.” He quickly recalls the video from his childhood and knows immediately that Freddie absolutely cannot see it.

He slams shut his laptop, startling Freddie. “My dear, what’s wrong?”

Rami is trying his hardest not to panic. He squeezes his eyes shut and takes deep breaths.
Freddie clasps his hand. “Darling, you’re scaring me. We were having a lovely time. What’s happened?”

He finally works up the courage to open his eyes. Freddie Mercury is here in his apartment, holding his hand, looking at him with concern. This is real, Rami knows that.

Rami also knows what else is, unfortunately, still a reality.

“Freddie,” he swallows hard, “do you know why I thought you were a ghost at first?”

Freddie sucks in a breath, then opens his mouth as if to begin protesting. He thinks better of it though. “Yes, my dear. I have an idea.”

Freddie sits back fully on the couch. Rami lays his head on the singer’s shoulder. They’re still holding hands.

They sit like that for a while, quiet with their thoughts. Rami can hear Freddie’s heartbeat. You’re real, so real, stay here, here now with me.

“Rami dear, you’re saying things aloud again when you don’t mean to.”

He snuggles in closer. “I meant to say them that time.”

Freddie sighs, resigned. “I can’t stay.”

“Why not?” He holds Freddie’s hand tighter.

The singer looks down at Rami; the actor won’t look back up at him. “I need to live out the rest of my life. I need to see it through.”

Rami can’t hold back his tears anymore, can’t help the sniffle that’s heard.

Freddie nudges him. “Come now, darling.” Rami turns fully against Freddie, allowing the singer to embrace him properly.

“I have to go now,” Freddie whispers after several minutes of indulging in the closeness.

“What? No, you just got here. You have so much more to teach me.”

Freddie looks deep into Rami’s large eyes, red from crying over him, pleading with him for so many things. “You’re too much, Rami. I’m too tempted to do whatever you ask of me.” He lifts the man’s hand to his lips, kissing the back in the most gentlemanly way. “And that means I have to go sooner than later, because I am not one for denying temptation.”

He gets up from the couch, pulling Rami up with him. He puts on his jacket and walks to the front door with Rami close in tow.

Freddie turns to look at Rami one more time. “You are a truly talented actor, darling. You are going to inspire and dazzle with your performance. If there’s anything to take away from this night, it’s that I’ll be with you every step on this journey — in my own way.” He smirks and winks at the other man.

Rami is trying to stubbornly stay sad, but he can’t help the amused huff his releases.

“Goodbye, my dear.”
“Goodbye, Freddie.”

Freddie quickly exits, not allowing Rami to make any last-ditch efforts in prolonging his stay.

Rami is left standing helplessly staring at the empty space where once a legend occupied. The emptiness is awful. He has to try; one more glance at Freddie. That’s all he wants.

He whips open his door and rushes into the hallway. He looks down in the direction of the elevators but doesn’t see anyone. He looks in the other direction. Hell, he even looks up at the ceiling for any sign that Freddie Mercury is still here.

But he’s gone.

Rami thought he’d have trouble sleeping that night. Instead, the emotional drain and heartbreak had left him exhausted. He barely was able to wake up and prepare for the work day ahead.

Fuck, he didn’t want to go anywhere.

The actor’s a damn professional, however, so here he is at the studio as scheduled, memorizing this week’s episode script and rehearsing as if everything was business as usual.

On with the show, he bitterly tells himself.

When lunch is called, he tries to split as quickly as possible to his trailer so he can have an hour to sulk in peace. Then he hears Stephanie screaming for him from somewhere.

She’s running toward him while frantically waving her phone. “Rami! You have a call!”

Damn it, he doesn’t want to talk to anyone right now. “Steph, take a message. I’m going to my trailer.”

“Rami, you’re going to fucking take this call right now!” She slams the phone against his chest.

“What is so important?”


Goddamn, Stephanie’s scary. He hits the unmute button. “Rami Malek speaking.”

“Mr. Malek! I’m so glad I could reach you. Graham King here. I want to speak to you about a possible role in a little biopic I’ve been working on. Are you at all familiar with the music of Queen?”

Rami turns his face up to the heavens, hoping Freddie can somehow see his blinding smile. “I’m quite familiar with Queen, actually. I love Freddie Mercury.”
“Hello?”

“Oh, Brian dear. It’s Fred.”

Brian promptly disconnects the call and returns his phone’s screen to an article on how to best rescue sea turtles.

*phone vibrates* ♪♫ Oh, (I know) you gonna take me home tonight? (Please) ♪♫
*phone vibrates* ♪♫ Oh, down beside that red firelight ♪♫
*phone vibrates* ♪♫ Are you gonna let it all hang out? ♪♫
*phone vibrates* ♪♫ Fat bottom-

“Look, you insensitive asshat. Congratulations, you’ve managed to piss off an old man. Now, never call-”

“Brian, your wormhole works brilliantly!”

Brian’s mind is suddenly in overdrive. Christ, the wormhole! (Although, it’s not really a wormhole but a tear in space and time that can be forced into existence within Earth’s atmosphere by a powerful vacuumlike device Brian developed when he, well, was honestly just putting back together an old Hoover handheld vacuum prototype he picked up in America back in the ’80s. Using his scientific knowledge and Deacy’s electrical engineering tips, he accidentally punched a hole through time.

Given the result, it was all probably for the best that Brian and John’s combined brainpower was mostly put toward music.)

“… Freddie?”

“Yes, darling. It’s really me.”

“Where the hell are you?”

“In America helping out the wonderful young actor that will portray me in our movie.”

“Our movie? You’re telling me you used my device-”

“The Bri Hole …”

The guitarist runs a hand over his face. “I never named it the Bri Hole. That’s awful.”

“What about the May Hole?”

“That somehow seems worse.” Brian shakes his head in dismay. “Freddie, you used my device without telling me.”

“Well, of course I did. You tell me you traveled to the future and came back successfully, and expect me to not want to give the Bri Hole a ride?”

“OH MY GOD, FREDDIE, NO!”

Brian can hear the singer laughing without restraint. “Oh, darling! Apologies! I couldn’t resist that
Hearing the joyful voice of his long-lost friend is fully hitting Brian now. He has to keep himself from swooning. He must stay strong and hold on to this moment for as long as possible. “How did you find out about the movie?”

“I read through your notes when you went to the loo.”

Brian sighs. He wasn’t going to tell Freddie or anyone for that matter about the time travel device. The singer just happened be the lone living soul there to witness his return from the future. He had to explain himself, but he never told Freddie exactly where he went or what he did.

“Should I be calling you Gwilym Lee in this time?” Freddie asks.

“Ahem,” Brian clears his throat suddenly. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Oh, sure. You just happened to travel to the future when the movie was being filmed and didn’t play yourself.”

“Gwilym is a very real person! I’m a rock star, an astrophysicist, and a lot of other things, but not an actor.”

“Fine! Keep up the ruse if you must. Besides, I was mostly interested in the person playing me.”

“Of course, you were,” Brian says, bemused. “So, you’ve met Rami? Oh, Fred. You should have seen him portray you. It was brilliant. Sent shivers up me spine … but wait, you know, I don’t think he’s been announced as having the part yet.”

“And he still might not get the part unless you help.”

“What?”

“You have to ring the filmmakers and tell them about Rami.”

“But I’m not supposed to know him yet!”

“Darling, he’s a television actor right now. Just tell them you were up late last evening and happened across an American series called Mr. Robot. Chat them up about how much the young star reminds you of your favorite bandmate.”

“Oh, that’s such an obvious lie.”

“How would they know you really didn’t see him on the telly?”

“Not that part. I mean my favorite bandmate. John was all our favorite.”

Freddie huffs at his friend’s joke, fondness overwhelming him. “Bri, I love you,” he says suddenly. “I feel like I haven’t said that enough to you and the others.”

The tears fall freely from Brian’s eyes. He doesn’t bother wiping them from his cheeks. “Fred, I’ve missed you. Can’t you come over now? Can I see you?”

“Not yet.”

“Why?”
“I need one more favor from you. Well, future you.”

“I’ll do anything.”

The desperation in his friend’s voice is almost enough to make Freddie abandon his plans. But he knows he’s right about how things should progress from here on. “Brian darling, when you meet me again, it can’t just be you. We need to reconnect with the mothership.”

The singer can hear Brian’s resigned sigh.

“And I know the perfect time and opportunity to do so.”

“Hello, John!” Brian doesn’t hesitate with the greeting, barely opening the front door completely before shouting the words.

John blinks a bit owlishly at his old friend.

“Look, Rog! It’s Deacy!”

John can see the drummer poke his head from the kitchen. “Yes, Bri. It was never going to be anyone else. What is with you tonight?” His head disappears back into the kitchen. “Get the hell inside, John! I’ve waited my entire life to see this movie! I refuse to wait any longer.”

Brian mimics Roger under his breath using a crybaby voice. John can’t hold back his laughter. Oh, his band of brothers. How he’s missed them. As if reading John’s mind, or more likely just feeling the same surge of affection, Brian wraps John in a fierce hug.

Roger fully comes out of the kitchen then. “There’ll be time for hugging later, you old softies. We’ve got our bloody life story to watch.”

“Good to see you too, Rog,” John says, voice light with mirth.

“Yeah, yeah,” Roger grumbles but throws an arm over John’s shoulders as they walk.

The two sit on the couch while Brian gets the prescreener disc the movie studio gave them so they could have a private, early viewing of *Bohemian Rhapsody* before it’s shown in cinemas. Brian hesitates with it, tapping the case against his leg and looking anxiously at the door.

“What are you waiting for?” Roger asks. “Why are you looking at the door? It’s meant to be just the three of us tonight. Only Queen.”

“Exactly,” the guitarist says, cryptically. “I should perhaps make more popcorn.”

John and Roger both look meaningfully at the huge bowl of the snack set on the table directly in front of them.

“Drinks?” Brian suggests.

The two men on the couch simply turn their heads to the couple of wine bottles next to the popcorn.

“Well,” Brian clears his throat, “allow me to give some background on the film, for Deacy’s sake.”

“Brian, I was Queen’s bass player for 20 years. I think I know enough background story.”
“And we talk to him every week about everything. He knows the struggle of getting the movie made.” Roger gets up from the couch to better face his friend. “What is really going on with you tonight?”

It suddenly gets quite windy in the room. There’s absolutely no sound to it though. The source of the chaos is a sliver of darkness that forms out of nowhere. A person emerges from it, and the dark tear heals itself, leaving an eerie calm.

The new arrival takes in his surroundings. “My goodness, Brian. You haven’t changed a thing in here.” That’s not entirely true. There’s a wall dedicated to all things Queen and Freddie. Freddie’s courteous enough not to look too closely.

“You came, Fred!” Brian throws himself at the singer. He almost lifts him off the ground with the strength of his hug, possible back troubles be damned.

“Of course, I’m here, darling.” Freddie allows Brian to get his fill of hugging, not rushing his friend.

When finally they separate, they turn toward their bandmates, who have yet to say anything. Shock etched onto their faces.

The hard stares go on for a good minute, the only sounds made are the rapid breaths all four are taking.

“You bastards!” That’d be Roger suddenly.

Brian and Freddie look to the floor, shame-faced.

“I fucking knew it!” Roger starts chucking magazines from the side table in his friends’ direction. “Fucking time travel!” Once he’s run out of magazines and books (and an antique clock, Brian laments), he reaches for a wine bottle.

“NOT THE WINE!” Brian and Freddie scream in unison.

Roger was too tired to go through with throwing the bottle anyway. He closes his eyes and takes a few deep, calming breaths. With the rage dissipated, he can focus on his friends.

One is not quite as tall as he used to be, formerly dark curls now grey and white. Eyes sunken, skin loose. Properly old.

The other one is not as old as he last saw him, which still wasn’t old enough. The long-simmering grief of never being able to see his late friend properly old like the rest of them threatens to boil over. But to see Freddie again in his prime though ... it’s a miracle. He can’t waste any more time on his grief and anger.

Freddie suddenly finds his arms full of drummer. “Oh, God, Fred,” Roger cries. “You crazy, beautiful bastard.”

The singer holds him. Offers comfort as he had when Roger would come home to their small flat, often needing a shoulder to cry on over the injustices and heartbreaks Roger seemed to always face. Freddie pulls him back to look him in the eyes and is pleasantly surprised by the smile that greets him. He runs fingertips under Roger’s white beard. “Darling, you look like Santa Claus.”

Roger sputters with a watery laugh.
“Don’t get me wrong. You’re a very handsome Santa. You can come down my chimney any time.”

Brian and Roger collectively groan.

But Deacy doesn’t, Freddie notices. The bassist is still sat on the couch. Silent. Unmoving.

He’s keen-eyed though, focused on Freddie as he approaches. The singer settles next to his quiet friend, clasps one of his hands, brings their foreheads together. “Dear, dear John,” he whispers, wiping his friend’s tears from his face. “My dearest.”

John’s practically quaking. He can’t close his eyes for fear this’ll all be proven a dream and his friend will be gone again. “Hello, Freddie.” Because there is no doubt in his mind that this is Freddie Mercury. And even if this isn’t Freddie, well, fuck all. He’ll take this, this moment he never thought could happen again in his lifetime.

Freddie places a tender kiss on Deacy’s forehead. His lips move to an ear to whisper sweet, secret things. The bassist’s famous shy smile finally makes an appearance, steadily growing into his other famous bright smile. Brian and Roger take that as a sign to come in closer. Freddie and John rise from the couch to meet them in the middle.

These are four very different people, leaders of their own lives who face separate highs and lows, joys and struggles, partners and families. They had no business belonging to each other, yet music made them one.

Tonight, the world gave them a precious last moment together — holding each other up, cradling and comforting — a rare gift from the same world that tore them apart entirely too soon.

Despite the impending sadness that awaits when they physically part ways, they find much-needed solace.

They realize this isn’t how they end. They’ll always be together — forever in their music.

Queen is forever.
“Can we watch this bloody movie already?”

The four bandmates laugh at the sudden gruff request and release each other from their group hug, the great weight of emotions finally easing thanks to Roger’s impatience.

Freddie sits on the floor, pulling Deacy down next to him on his right, Roger sits on the couch directly behind Freddie, and after putting the disc in the player, Brian joins Freddie on the floor on his left.

“Ready, Freddie?”

They all smile at Roger’s familiar lyrical inquiry.

Freddie’s practically glowing. “Absolutely, darling.”

Roger presses play.

||

[Heathrow Airport]

“Oh, dearies, look at my lovely Rami. So perfect already.”

“They definitely have him looking the part,” John says, impressed.

“Poor boy has to endure my teeth through.”

“He kept them, you know,” Brian says. “Got them gold-plated.”

“Strange thing to do, honestly,” Roger says, “but you left a hell of an impression on him, Fred.”

Freddie wistfully watches Movie Freddie write lyrics at a bus stop. “It’s mutual.”

||

[First appearance of Roger and Brian performing in Smile]

“ROGER!” Freddie practically shrieks. “How much did you pay the casting person to get that beautiful boy to play you?”

“Five thousand American dollars and VIP backstage passes to one of our Las Vegas shows.”

Three faces turn sharply to look in judgment at the drummer.

“I knew it!” John exclaims.

“Well, I didn’t have the luxury of time travel to ensure I was properly cast! Unlike certain people!”

Brian and Freddie offer no more commentary on the matter.
Freddie, John, Roger, and Brian have their first performance together.

“Everything’s happening quite fast in this already,” Brian says.

“Yeah,” Roger agrees. “It definitely wasn’t all that easy finding John as our bass player.”

“It was easy enough for me,” John says. “Brian offered me the spot when he was drunk at a disco.”

Brian rolls his eyes. “That’s only, probably, 80 percent true.”

“Aww,” Freddie pouts. “Deacy’s discovery would have been fun to see in the movie.”

Freddie’s birthday

“You flirted with my sister?”

“No, of course not!” Roger is quick with the denial. “The writers completely made that up.”

Freddie seems to accept that and turns back around to the screen.

Brian looks at Roger knowingly. Roger makes a zipping motion over his lips in silent demand of his continued ignorance on the matter.

First appearance of Paul Prenter

Everyone: “Boooooo!!!!!”

They all toss popcorn at the screen.

[“It’s just a bit weird. What exactly are you doing with that car?”]

Roger throws the wine bottle this time.

“Go find a cupboard to crawl into, Rog!” Brian screams.

Brian records his guitar portion of “Bohemian Rhapsody”

“So, Bri,” Roger begins, “where did you go to school for acting?”

“What?”

“Will you just admit that’s you, already?” he insists.

“Roger, you met Gwilym!”

“Yes, and he was very much you. It was total déjà vu.”
“That is a wig. He has features that are quite distinct from my own. Gwil. Is. Not. Me.”

“All right, if he’s not you, then did you have a child specifically for the purpose of portraying you in a movie?”

Brian gets very quiet and turns back to the screen.

“Oh, my Lord!” Roger practically bounces off the couch. “You stashed a child away to groom as an actor and then went into the future to align the production schedule to when Gwilyn was finally age-appropriate to play you!”

“Truly diabolical, darling.”

“That makes a lot of sense,” John agrees.

“I hate you all,” Brian says with a laugh and smile identical to Movie Brian’s, who is giddy with excitement for Freddie’s operatic song and the future that awaits them.

||

[Queen throw a brick through Ray Foster’s window]

“Can you imagine if we actually did that after some of the basic extortion we endured early on?” John says.

Roger’s still bitter about the terrible deal they made when they were young and hungry and desperate for the chance to make their music. “We should have toppled a whole building on those wankers.”

||

[Freddie asks Mary to marry]

Freddie practically coos over the scene. “So lovely. Dearies. So precious. Beautiful creatures, these two.”

[Brian, Roger, and John interrupt celebratory just-engaged shagging]

“How could you barge in like that?” Freddie’s outraged. “It was getting quite good.”

“It’s a Hollywood picture, Freddie,” Brian says. “They weren’t going to show you full-on doing it.”

“Pity,” Freddie’s genuinely disappointed. “My life’s story would have made an amazing porno.”

||

[Tour of America]

“Oh, Rami fills out my costumes wonderfully.” Freddie sighs. “What were your favorites, lovies?”

“The harlequin ones were always fun,” John offers.

Roger huffs. “Your sequin jumpsuits were so damn shiny from all the reflecting lights, I’d risk blinding myself if I dared look at you.”
“You know my favorite’s the angel outfit,” Brian says, because that was an aesthetic he could truly share with their lead singer.

Freddie nods in understanding. “We complemented each other so well onstage, darling.”

Brian sighs. “We was glam.”

[Mary and Freddie break up]

“Are you okay, Fred?” John asks.

“Just thinking about my real Mary,” a wistful look passes, “and remembering that not all soulmates have the same sort of happily ever after.”

[“What do you think?” “… Gayer.”]

“Ha! I’m hilarious!”

The collective eye-roll at Roger could practically be heard.

[“We Will Rock You”]

“I wrote this song before you had your mustache!” Brian exclaims, confused.

“Yes, it’s a bit disorienting,” Freddie says.

“And to think I was worried about the movie being predictable for us,” Roger says.


[Freddie’s party]

“Is this the only party scene of the movie?” Freddie wonders.

“Perhaps they had to condense for time,” Roger reasons. “We did have a lot of parties.”

“Oh, look. It’s the girls on bicycles.” Brian’s amused until he remembers the partying time period the girls are part of. “You don’t think the New Orleans party is part of this? Of which I know nothing because I wasn’t there and have the alibis to prove I wasn’t there that will stand up in any court in any country.”

“I couldn’t tell you because I, of course, have absolutely no recollection of the party,” Roger says, not looking anyone in the eyes. “Deacy, do you see anything of the New Orleans party in this scene?”
“Abso-fucking-lutely no recollection,” John automatically insists.

Freddie looks meaningfully at each of his bandmates. “Such a shame and AN INCREDIBLE COINCIDENCE that all four of us can’t recall a thing about the New Orleans party and will continue to not remember until we are all long dead.”

They nod in secret solidarity.

∥

[Freddie meets Jim]

“Freddie, have you been around in this time long enough to see something called a heart-eyes emoji?” Brian asks. “Because that’s essentially what your face is expressing at the moment.”

∥

[“It’s not disco.” “Then what is it?” “It’s Queen.”]

“You tell ’em, John!” Deacy yells out of nowhere.

Brian and Roger look over to their friend guiltily. (Freddie proudly looks smug for John. He always believed in the song’s greatness.)

Roger clears his throat. “Um, Deacy. I want to, again, apologize for the skepticism—”

“Pissiness,” Freddie helpfully corrects.

“Yes, thank you, Fred,” Roger flicks Freddie’s ear hard. “I was wrong. Utterly, completely, incredibly wrong. I’m sorry.”

Movie John begins to play the now-famous riff from “Another One Bites the Dust,” and their on-screen counterparts rightly shut up.

They begrudgingly admit to the song’s potential to be good.

“It will be,” Movie John says with sharp confidence. “If you all will just shut up and play.”

Real-life John indulges in a smug smile of his own.

∥

[Hot Space press conference]

“However, John, I will not apologize for my disdain for Hot Space,” Roger loudly declares.

“Are we going to do this now?” John asks. “After more than thirty years!”

“Yes! Because since I’m humble enough to admit my wrongs, it’s long-overdue for you to admit that I was right!”

“Roger, don’t start this again.” Brian attempts to mediate between the bandmates as his movie counterpart does with the reporters at the press conference. “The album has its ardent fans. Just because you don’t like it doesn’t mean everyone else agrees with you.”

“Would you lot shut up!” Freddie interrupts. “Movie Freddie is in crisis here!”
“Sorry, Fred,” the three murmur and go back to watching.

[“I Want to Break Free”]

“Wow, Rog,” Brian says. “Ben really does you justice in that outfit.”

“What do you mean?” Roger asks.

“He looks gorgeous.”

“So, what you’re really saying is I looked gorgeous in the schoolgirl drag?”

Brian seals his lips stubbornly at first. Then: “All right, I’ll say it. You looked gorgeous, Roger. Truly.”

The drummer, who was expecting a good bout of back-and-forth taunting, is in utter shock. “Uhhh, huh. Th-thanks, Bri.”

Meanwhile:

“I thought my tits were bigger than that in the video,” Freddie wonders. “Deacy, weren’t my tits bigger?”

[“You’ve just killed Queen.”]

“Oh, that’s a laugh!” Freddie’s outraged for his movie counterpart. “Can you imagine if solo albums actually broke us up? Rog, you would’ve killed us long ago, many times over!”

[Freddie flies solo]

The movie becomes very intense once Movie Freddie goes off to make his albums without the rest of Queen.

It’s a big mishmash of various events, all highly concentrated drama that illustrates how detrimental being apart could be for all of them — not just Freddie.

As Movie Freddie finally exorcises Paul from his life, the four men picture the rain on screen cleansing them of the past pains they’ve endured separately and the pains they inflicted on each other on their crazy journey.

“Families fight,” Movie Freddie declares when calling Jim Beach to request a meeting with the mothership.

They always found their way back to each other though. Like their counterparts are doing now on film. Like they’re amazingly doing now tonight.

They don’t call Queen the mothership for nothing.
None of them say a thing as Freddie is diagnosed with AIDS. They barely breathe, to be honest.

The Freddie that’s sat in the living room with them hasn’t told them yet in his time. And as if they were reverting to that time, John, Roger, and Brian won’t force him to talk to them about it here. They’ll be there for him when he’s ready.

This is Freddie’s fight.

||

“This is the cutest shit I’ve ever seen,” Roger proclaims.

||

“I think I’m nervous for us,” Brian marvels. “I can feel the adrenaline like we were actually back there about to perform.”

“The details of the stage are amazing,” Freddie says. “Oh, look at my Rami playing the piano. Good God that’s eerie how he’s got me down.”

As Freddie is focused on his movie counterpart, so too is John on his. The cameras at Live Aid were more concerned with Freddie at the time — rightfully so — and that meant you couldn’t really see his part of the performance too well. Watching it like this in a cinematic style, he’s pleased to see that Movie John gets quite a lot of attention. You can see how he bounces around when he’s particularly enjoying himself, when he comes back to Roger to sync their transitions, when Brian and himself would lift off their instruments in a flourish at the same time.

Deacy hasn’t performed with Queen in so long. He misses this, so much so that his fingers are twitching, mimicking the flicks and positions on a bass guitar for “Bohemian Rhapsody.” He remembers how to play it. He remembers how to play them all.

“They are really copying us beat for beat,” Roger says when Movie Queen segues into “Radio Ga Ga.” Roger is so proud of all the actors, especially Ben, of course. The best money he ever spent on a bribe.

The four of them start getting into the music as if they were in the crowd, raising their hands up prepared to clap and waiting for Movie Freddie to finish singing each line.

All we hear is *clap clap*
Radio ga ga *clap clap*
Radio goo goo *clap clap*
Radio ga ga *clap clap*
All we hear is *clap clap*
Radio ga ga *clap clap*
Radio blah blah *clap clap*

Then Freddie can’t hold himself back any longer and starts singing with Movie Freddie.

Radio what’s new?
When Movie Freddie starts doing his “Ayyyyy-oh” calls to the audience, they return the “Ayyyyy-oh” right back, Freddie sounding, of course, the best.

“Hammer to Fall” is a hard-charging song, and they work their respective air instruments at max capacity. Roger’s sat on the back of the couch absolutely crushing his invisible drums. Deacy’s bouncing and shuffling to his steady bass beat. Freddie gets cheeky at the same time he does on-screen while belting out the tune. Brian thoroughly shreds his parts as if there was an actual guitar in his hands.

They keep playing throughout the Live Aid concert. Reliving it all through the film and through mimicking what they’ve done so many times on countless stages around the world.

“We Are the Champions” finishes the set and perfectly sums up the band’s place in history. The song was always meant to be a collective “we,” but tonight, it’s about them.

I've paid my dues
Time after time
I've done my sentence
But committed no crime
And bad mistakes
I've made a few
I've had my share of sand kicked in my face
But I've come through

Queen are the champions, my friends. They’ll keep on fighting ‘til the end.

Chapter End Notes

To Freddie: Love and miss you, always. To Queen: Thank you for the soundtrack to my life. To Rami: Win all the awards, babe.

Thanks for reading, everyone!

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