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**Maggots & Their Home Inside Your Skin**

by The Seance (MissingOneEye)

**Summary**

Have you ever thought that perhaps he acts the way he does to reach you?

**Notes**

I can't with this ship.
Three Years Ago

It had been years since Klaus Hargreeves had stepped foot inside the Hargreeves' Manor, the Umbrella Academy, or whatever it was that people called it nowadays. He stood in front of it, watching it sway as though dancing to the music pounding inside his head, and he realized he didn't want to be there. There was a painful lump that had taken refuge in his throat, and he would be lying if he said he wasn't choking on it.

"Master Klaus, please. Return home at once."

Pogo sounded utterly destroyed. He recognized that tone. That was a tone he was too familiar with when he was crawling across whatever floor he'd ended up on, desperate to find something to stave off the dead, nails scratching at the wood, tile, or cement until they bled. Something bad had happened, that much he knew, but Pogo refused to say anything until he was there.

Now he was, but he was afraid to turn the knob. He was afraid to open the door.

When he did, he saw the others. They stood around with crestfallen expressions lining their features. He counted.

Four, not including himself.

Everyone knew what happened to Five, except they didn't. Not really. But, no one expected him to be there. He wasn't coming. But, where was Ben? Could he not make it? Allison saw him, and Klaus watched as she tried not to breakdown sobbing. He saw how her makeup was smeared across her cheeks, giving away the fact that she already had.

The world closed in on him as he watched everyone turn their heads toward him. No one said anything. There was a strange ticking inside his head, coming from the grandfather clock that sat upstairs out of view.

"...Klaus..."

"No," the words left Klaus' lips before he realized what he was saying. He was lightheaded. Everything was spinning around him, but he attributed that to withdrawal. Everything was freezing, a painful cold spreading through his joints and cracking his bones, but everything was burning up.
His body was on fire, blood roaring through his veins.

"Klaus, I'm so sorry."

"No."

"Ben...he..."

"...don't say it. I'm not stupid. I can count. I'm counting. I...four?"

"...he's not coming."

"Well, why not?"

"...because he can't. He's gone."

That fact should have been obvious by all of the looks, by the tears that streamed down silent faces, but it took Klaus a moment to fully process what was being said. He lowered himself to the floor, sitting cross-legged, and staring at the tattoos that lined the palms of his hands.

Hello.

Goodbye.

"Klaus, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry..."

"He...was it his..."

"...yes...that's what Pogo said."
"I wasn't there."

"...no, no one was. It just sort of...happened, I guess. I don't...really know," she replied softly before shooting the others a look Klaus didn't see. She lowered herself next to him, "Pogo says we'll...have a funeral and..."

"...I don't want to."

"What?"

"I don't want to be here. I'm going."

"Klaus..."

Diego was squirming uncomfortably like he wanted to say something, but he was conflicted. Everyone watched Klaus rise from the floor and turn his back on them.

"He was our brother too," Diego spoke, voice harsher than he intended. A shattered sob escaped Klaus' lips, which shocked everyone into silence.

"You don't get it...I saw...I knew. The growing pains, the...reluctance to...use it. I know. I understood that."

No one stopped Klaus as he walked away, head bowed and staring straight at his feet.
I See Dead People

Chapter by Man With A Broken Mind (MissingOneEye), The Seance (MissingOneEye)

Chapter Summary

He'll keep running until he dies.

Present Day

Klaus Hargreeves was afraid of the dark. As humorous as it sounded, as childish as it was, it was a fear that perpetually drove sharpened claws into his chest, burrowing beneath ribs and squeezing his heart until he was worried it would pop, like a balloon full of blood. In the dark, his mind wandered to places that were far less pleasant than reality. The shadows danced with the corpses of the deceased, and they always screamed at him. They demanded his attention.

He left the bedroom's lights on.

He ignored the body that sat beside him, so light the bed didn't so much as shift. His brother sighed in response.

"It's not helping you, you know."

"I don't need you to tell me that, Benny. I'm aware...and I'm in an ugly predicament. I would think you had more sympathy for me."

He heard his brother hum in thought, but that was all. Klaus readjusted, rolling onto his back and staring up at the ceiling's uneven texture. The room was swimming in his eyes, and everything sounded as though it was underwater. He opened his mouth and gulped in lungfuls of the ocean, but it didn't so much as burn as he let himself drown inside of its caress.

He must've closed his eyes.

"...this high is only temporary. Then what? You're going to go steal more money to buy more?"
"...ah, you know me so well."

"Doesn't that get tiring? You can't run away forever."

"I'm trying to run away from you too, baby brother."

"We're the same age, I think."

"Really now," Klaus mused, cracking an eye open and glancing at his brother. Ben was staring at him with a flat expression plastered on his face.

"Yeah. I feel two years older."

"...can't say you look it. You look good for your age." A lazy smile spread across his face, and Ben rolled his eyes in place of a reply.

"You're going to end up dead. Is that what you want? Do you think the dead won't chase after you? You'd be in their domain," he spoke after a moment, eyes glued to the other's face.

"You think there's a dead person that cries about seeing living people? You know like...a weird Sixth Sense mega-twist. I'd watch it. What about you? Oh, wait. Actually, nevermind. You see living people."

"I think most of us see living people. I have to watch everything you do, and you know what? It's shit. You think I like watching you...do this to yourself? Klaus, they'll follow you. Wherever you end up when you die, they'll be there. You can't run from this. I couldn't."

"...that's touching. Really, Ben. Deep," Klaus muttered into his pillow, but he knew how his brother looked at him every time he held a needle to his skin or clutched a handful of pills. Sure, he'd probably OD'ed a few times around, but he wasn't dead. Maybe he liked to chase that thrill, or maybe he was afraid to go through with purposefully killing himself, so he hoped accidents would.

Or, maybe neither of those options were true. Did he think he was immune to death?
He saw what it did to people, saw how those lost souls wandered desperately trying to get someone's attention. Anyone, really. He just so happened to be the only choice, the medium they tried to speak through. He shut them up with drugs. Little things at first, things like marijuana, but eventually that wasn't enough. It didn't scare away the shakes, didn't silence the screaming, and pretty soon he was taking hits off of things that could kill him.

When did that happen?

*Ben, he's gone.*

*He's gone.*

*Goodbye.*

Klaus figured it didn't matter when it happened. He wouldn't remember even if he tried. The harder shit was liable to fry his brain, and that seemed just fine with him. If it cooked his nerves, perhaps then he wouldn't have to realize the truth. Or acknowledge it.

The Hargreeves Circus was in town. Their precious ringleader finally kicked the bucket, and Klaus didn't care. Not in the slightest, and he didn't even feel bad about it. He wanted to sleep, that's what he wanted. He hadn't seen his siblings since Ben died, though he had received the voicemails left by Allison. He listened, but he didn't return the call. He deleted them because he was a sucker for the pain.

They probably thought he was dead too, and he wondered if they cared.

"...Are you listening to me, Klaus?"

"I don't really have a choice, 'cause you won't go away."

"Is that what you want?"
"No. I don't know. Who cares what I want? Man, I need a...oh! Did you hear about dear ol' daddy?"

"I did. The voicemail."

"How do you feel about that?"

"I'm not sure."

"Silly. You of all people should hate him, you know. It's okay, Ben, to hate that..."

"...Klaus, I don't know. He's gone. He won't hurt us anymore, but...that doesn't make the pain go away, does it?"

"Damn you, Ben. Damn you and your logical crap. I don't want to think about that. Not at all. The old man got what he wanted, didn't he? Why would his greatest disappointment ruin his funeral? Wait, no! That's a beautiful idea! Pack your things, Ben! We're going on a road trip," Klaus all but shouted, his voice dipping dramatically before rising musically. He threw himself off the bed, patting himself down, dusting himself off, and spinning around as though he was a ballerina.

As far as Ben knew, he'd never taken any dance lessons.

"You can't drive."

"Not legally!"

Before Ben could argue, there was a knock on the door.
Daddy Dearest

Chapter by Man With A Broken Mind (MissingOneEye), The Seance (MissingOneEye)

Chapter Summary

Klaus stood, an expression of utter disbelief spread across his face.

Chapter Notes

Wow! I wrote this yesterday and get a swarm of kudos! Glad someone likes it.

"Get your shit. We're going."

Klaus was still trying to process what he was seeing, watching as Diego appraised his dingy apartment. If he had to describe his brother's expression at that current moment, it would be something along the lines of disappointment, but that was a look he was too familiar with. It wasn't a shock seeing it plastered on Diego's face either since the man never once tried to hide his dislike for Klaus.

That was fine by him. He knew Diego wasn't around to play nice, or whatever other DC bullshit he told himself. I work better alone.

"Hey there, Batman. Long time no see. I know! It's great seeing you again after all these long hard years of being alone," Klaus exclaimed theatrically, spreading his arms, "would you like to enter my...humble abode?"

"I would rather die."

"Suit yourself, but...I wouldn't do that if I were you. It doesn't seem like the greatest place to be." Somewhere behind him, he heard Ben scoff, and he practically felt the roll of the dead man's eyes.

"Oh, and don't forget that part about not being able to run from you," he muttered, and a big grin spread across Number Four's lips.
"That's a good point."

"Am I interrupting something," Diego asked incredulously, eyeing the empty place where Ben would've been standing, had he been breathing and alive. Semantics, really.

"No! No, of course not! We always have time for you. What were you here for again? Oh right, right. Go on. Get back to the 'we're going, pack up your things' talk. But do it nicer."

"We don't have time for this. Dad died, and I want to shit on the funeral."

"Oh yes, of course, you do! Well, if that's the case...why did you come for me?"

"Allison said you weren't there, hadn't even heard from you. You could've, I don't know, called to administer that 'fuck you'. It wouldn't have been that hard. You pick up the phone, dial the-"

"I was going before you interrupted."

"And how were you supposed to get there?"

"A taxi? Illegal driving? Walking? There are so many ways."

"Uh huh. I can't even start with those options. What money?"

Klaus opened his mouth to say something, but he was rudely cut off when his brother continued to speak.

"What car?"

"Well..."
"And you'd walk? Do you even know where it is?"

"Yes! How could I not?"

"You don't," Ben piped up, and Klaus hissed at him to shut up. Diego stared, saying nothing for a long moment.

"I'm giving your junkie ass a ride. Let's go."

"Fine, fine. Let me...grab my things."

* * * * * * *

Ben quietly sat in the backseat of Diego's car, right next to Klaus, and they both watched the world blur by in a mix of browns, blacks, and greens. It had been such a long time since they'd been around, Klaus desperate to forget and Ben having no choice but to follow. It had worked out though, or at least that was what he told himself. His brother wasn't dead, despite the numerous attempts, and he was, well, dead, but still around.

That was fine by him, though he did wish he could touch.

That would make his connection with Klaus a lot easier if he could just pry pills from those shakings hands and console him. He was, as it currently was, a voice. Merely a voice that could be ignored, and often times was.

The manor was just as it had been left, before Ben died, and before Klaus ran from his problems as they chased him. It brought back awful memories for both of them, but neither of them mentioned that because everyone already knew.

"...we're here," Ben's words chased away the silence. Klaus jerked out of whatever reverie he was perusing. He cleared his throat, shifted awkwardly, and threw him a look he didn't understand.

"Thank you, Captain Obvious. What would I do without you?"
"Die, probably."

Klaus didn't reply because suddenly Diego was telling him to mind his manners, and Ben nearly laughed at the prospect. He didn't laugh. He hadn't laughed in a long time.

There'd never been an appropriate moment.
Goodbye, Old Man

Chapter by Man With A Broken Mind (MissingOneEye). The Seance (MissingOneEye)

Chapter Summary

Goodbye, and Good Riddance.

Chapter Notes

Glad everyone likes this more than I do

The five of them that were left stood around in their daddy's foyer, eyes glued onto anything that wasn't each other, and the silence that fell over their heads was almost suffocating. Klaus was struck with a feeling of Deja Vu, and he was positive everyone else noticed it too. The last time they'd gathered together like this, solemn and silent, was to grieve over Ben.

Good old Ben.

He was leaning against the stairwell's banister, but no one would ever acknowledge his presence. They had no idea that he was watching them, staring as they argued, and let the silence brew until it was nearly unbearable. It was a storm cloud, lightning tension buzzing excitedly over particles of poison oxygen.

Klaus gulped it in, hoping distantly that it would kill him. He wanted to be anywhere else but here, in this place that killed his brother and robbed him of childhood, this place where the dark corrupted him and left him to rot.

"It's been a long time," Ben muttered, breaking his train of thought. Klaus glanced at him, studying him before he snickered. The others heard him, and Diego seemed agitated by his sudden noise.

"What's so funny, huh?"

"This. This whole thing. This family, really," was the reply he received, Klaus' eyes fallen on the leather-clad man. Ben pushed himself off the banister, a sigh escaping his lips by habit. No breath.
There was nothing left in his lungs.

"Oh yeah? Of course, you'd complain. You'd only call us if it was for dope money."

"Yeah. You remember the last time we met? To honor dear old Ben? After that, what? Nothing. None of us even tried, did we? Now we're here again, and...what are we supposed to do now? Act like we care that daddy dearest is dead, or...I got it, like we're actually a family? That's the funniest one. Hey, maybe while we're at it, we can act like this whole thing is normal," Klaus exclaimed, breaking into a big smile.

Diego rolled his eyes, but Luther was the one growing irate now.

"He was our-"

"Our what? I distinctly remember him being anything but a dad. I thought I'd come here to say hello, and I did. Goals met! Really, this whole reunion is lovely. Truly heartwrenching. Glad to see all of you again, after so long. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm being called by...nonliving forces. They say hi."

"Wait, Klaus," Allison called after him as he headed upstairs, but he was sure Luther stopped her because he never saw her as he walked down the second story's hall.

"...you know, that wasn't called for," Ben stated as he walked beside his brother. The man didn't reply, only shrugged his shoulders and ran his fingers down the walls he passed.

"What do you remember? I bet it really sucks being back here, doesn't it? Sorry, but I guess you're stuck here with me." A bittersweet smile spread across chapped lips as the man continued down the hall, the pads of his fingers feeling every bump, every texture of dried paint, of chipped wood.

"...it's not all bad," Ben answered after figuring out the words he was trying to say.

"Oh really?"

"We had good memories too," he explained as he watched Klaus' back.
"Like what exactly? Daddy locking us in the dark and forgetting about us? Ignoring our cries? I love those times too."

"Like us? I don't know. I'm glad you were around."

An uneasy silence fell over their heads, and Ben caught his brother's movements stutter. They neared their rooms. They passed them. Klaus dug fingernails into the wall, wincing as they dragged too hard across the surfaces.

"Oh yeah? That's the first time I've heard that. I should take a picture."

"I mean it."

"What did you like about having me around? I cried a lot."

"So did I."

"You had a reason! I bet it really hurt," Klaus trailed off, staring at the wooden panels beneath his feet.

"Only sometimes."

"Only sometimes he says. You're a real champ. I still cry over this. You're dead. I think you win in the morbid awful factor."

"I didn't think it was a competition. You know it's okay to cry."

"...but my eyeliner...just...looks so good today."

There was a chuckle, and then they laughed. It felt better than the stifling disdain that smothered the rooms downstairs. His family couldn't pretend to get along long enough to mourn their "father". It
wasn't surprising. They did the same thing during Ben's funeral until Klaus broke down. Then, everyone just melted into dirty looks and silence.

The laughing trailed off into small breaths and smiles.

"Is it wrong...?"

"Is what wrong, Klaus?"

"Is it wrong if I'm happy the old bastard is dead?"

"...no. I think it's a normal feeling."

"We were just kids..."

"I know. I know that. Believe me. I understand."

"You understand better than anyone else. You always have."

Ben didn't reply, unsure of what to say. He only nodded his head, but his brother didn't see it. He wasn't looking.

"I'm sorry," Klaus added, trying to voice how he felt. How much it hurt. The words never sounded right, no matter how many times he'd tried, or practiced. A big disappointment, that's what he was. He understood that.

"For what?"

"Being an unbearable jackass. It's a style that fits so well," he explained as his shaky hands fiddled with his clothes, messing around in pockets.
"...tell me that when you quit," Ben replied, eyes glued to his hands, and the quiet soaked into the cracks. Klaus began to realize how visible they were.
Traumatized Kids Traumatizing Kids

Chapter by Man With A Broken Mind (MissingOneEye), The Seance (MissingOneEye)

Chapter Summary

Childhood events shape how you grow. They mold you.

Chapter Notes

Eventually, I plan on writing a Pet Semetary crossover. Horror is my expertise. Fluffy nice things are foreign to me.

When Klaus found what he was looking for, he heard a disapproving hum escape his brother's lips. He didn't pay him any mind as he traversed the length of his father's study. It reminded him of lackluster attempts made trying to get his so-called father to notice that they existed. He did notice, long enough to train, but never long enough to be their dad.

"The children have come to say goodnight..."

The room was almost exactly the same, Klaus recalled as he opened drawers here and there, searching for something of value. Fingers wrapped around the spines of books, and he showed each one to Ben, only earning an eye roll from the deceased.

"How much do you think I can get for this, Benny?"

"Hopefully enough for help."

"That's not a nice thing to say. I'm trying here. You don't get what I have to go through."

"I'm dead, Klaus. I get it."

"Touche," the junkie replied with a heavy sigh, turning the leatherbound book over in his hands. He read the cover, didn't care, and dropped it at his feet. "There has to be something of value here."
Come on. How could there not be? Our dear father has to have had something...anything, really. I'll take anything."

"Stop. Does this not feel wrong to you?"

"Oh, quite the contrary mon ami. It feels...ah, right. A little bit of revenge, payback, yadda yadda. I feel like I'm paying for all of my trauma."

"Is that what you're doing? Seems like you're paying for drugs."

"Candy. Sweet delicious candy. If you were with me, really with me, you'd probably love it. Or you wouldn't. You have a big stick lodged firmly between your cheeks."

"You're desperate to die."

"No, not at all. It makes me feel so alive..."

Ben's brows knitted together, and the look he gave Klaus made his heart skip a beat. He clicked his tongue, broke eye contact, and went back to searching for something that he could pawn for some extra cash.

"...no. Don't you dare. Don't give me that kicked puppy look. I don't like it."

"I don't like watching you overdose."

"It was one time."

"So far."

Klaus nearly dropped another book he'd removed from the shelf as he picked at the binding, feeling Ben's stare burrow deep beneath his skin. He looked up, met his gaze, and a frown tugged at the corners of his lips. "It makes me feel good, Ben. Benny, what don't you get? I...need it. I do. I really do."
"You're stronger than that."

"I don't feel stronger than it."

His brother shook his head, and his eyes left his. There it was. That feeling of disappointment he basked in. He was used to it, maybe he craved it. He went out of his way to hear someone tell him how useless he was. Disgusting. Junkie. Waste of skin.

"...I know what you're thinking, and no, I don't think that," Ben spoke up after silence grew between them. It dissolved at the sound of his voice, and Klaus chased it into the darkness.

"Oh? Do praytell..."

"I don't think you're shit."

"You never did, did you?"

"I guess not."

Klaus was drowning, but he would never admit it sober. He'd rather follow the high into the ocean's tides, let it wash him away. He wouldn't exist, and frankly, he was okay with that. If the salt water opened its gaping jaws to swallow him whole, he would accept with open arms, falling into its embrace as it ate away everything he was.

But, the high was like a fire. The ocean snuffed it out. The salt water was Ben, or at least that's what he thought. The stare that rusted holes through him, through his body, his bones, the voice that lulled him into the dark, and yet the drugs weren't enough. The disappointment hurt so beautifully.

That was all he was destined for.

"Number Four, my greatest disappointment."
"Klaus. My name is Klaus. Don't call me that. I'm not just a number, not like them. I'm not like them. Look what you did...is counting down not good enough for you? You're content to watch the world burn."

Watch the world burn with me, Ben. I'd light myself on fire if it'd bring you back. If it made us a family again.

"Klaus, are you listening to me?"

"Yeah, yeah, be quiet for a sec..."

"Are you okay?"

"...would you believe me if I said yes?"

"No."

"Then why did you ask?"

"I was hoping you'd be honest."

Before Klaus thought of a reply, the lamp's light glinted off gold and caught his eye. He slowly stumbled forward, forgetting his legs, and reached out with skeletal fingers. Ben was awfully silent, watching as he gripped the golden box like a lifeline.

"Klaus, no. Look at you. Look how it's eating you. You're so skinny..."

"...and you're dead..."

That was the wrong answer. Too far, even for him. Ben looked away as though he'd been slapped, and Klaus felt as though a fist had collided with his gut. He didn't say sorry because he wasn't entirely sure that it would make the tension release its hold around his throat. If he didn't apologize, maybe he'd suffocate and die.
"This one time. I'll quit after.."

"You said that last time."
"Ben! Ben, please! Don't leave me! Don't...! They won't..."

Chapter Notes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhVVZDgA4Os

Tears streamed down Ben's cheeks, little rivulets leading to rivers irritating the skin and leaving it pink. Rose pink, like the flowers that bloomed in their mother's garden. Klaus watched, his eyes drawn to the movement, and he recognized it all too well. He tasted saltwater on his tongue, from his own tears, and his heart was being squeezed by his ribcage. It hurt to breathe, but it was nothing like the pain that Ben went through.

Klaus watched as the skin shifted, listened as Ben cried, and his brother tried to curl up into a fetal position. He wanted to console, but his lips moved and no words came out.

Slowly, hesitantly, he reached out and pressed fingers lightly against the skin of the other's stomach. He felt electricity run across his fingertips, raising goosebumps along his arms, and Ben whined. It was a pitiful sound that tore Klaus in two.

"Don't touch me."

"...It hurts...I'm trying to..."

"I could hurt you. Don't touch me!"

With that, he pulled his hand back as though he'd been burned, and he stared at Ben as he tried to pull himself together. Their father never noticed the growing pains, never cared, and Ben was always chastised for not mastering it. Too familiar. The darkness wrapped itself around Klaus, and he was reminded of how he failed too.
Always failures, never successes.

They were never good enough.

"...you won't hurt me."

"I can. I can, and you know that. You should be scared of me."

"I'm not scared of you. Want to hear about...the things I see? How could I be scared of you? It'd be really...hypocritical of me."

"...tell me. What do you see?"

"Father locked me in the mausoleum again. Said I had to learn to be brave, but I'm scared of it. I don't want to be brave, Ben. I don't want to do this. I know you don't either..."

"..." Ben slowly uncurled and lifted his head slightly, watching Klaus closely.

"It's awful...It's really awful..."

"...what do you see?"

"People...but they're all so messed up and...sometimes, sometimes there're pieces missing. They always scream at me, especially when I don't acknowledge them. I hate it. I hate it so much. Why can't people die peacefully and not...not just...fall apart? I don't know. I can't stand it."

"At least they don't smell," Ben added, trying to lighten the mood. Klaus was surprised, eyes widening as he stared at his brother's face. A small smile spread across his lips.

"I guess that's a good thing. They'd probably smell really bad..."
Ben made an attempt at a laugh, but it sounded breathless and pained. Klaus' smile fell, and his brows furrowed as concern etched itself into his features.

"Don't worry about me. You'll give yourself gray hair..."

"...oh well. Guess I'll get gray hair then. Should I get mom..?"

"No. No, don't. I don't want them to see me like this...I didn't even want you to see me like this, but..."

"It's okay. I don't mind. It's not even one of the scariest things I've seen. Not even close."

Ben didn't argue with him. He lied back in his bed and stared up at the ceiling, trying to wait out the pain that coursed through his nerves. Klaus hesitated again before reaching out once more, pressing his hand flat against the shifting skin. The boy beneath him tensed, their eyes locking as though Ben was attempting to reassure himself that his brother was okay. He inhaled deeply, but his body refused to relax. He knew what he could do, knew what it felt like to rip apart people, limb from limb.

Klaus glanced down at his stomach, where the killer rested.

The tips of the tentacles peeked out of Ben's flesh before wrapping gently around the fingers presented to them, and his breathing hitched anxiously. He heard his heart pounding in his ears. He tasted the sweat on his brother's skin.

"Klaus," he warned.

"It's okay. It doesn't hurt..."

"But..."

"I'm not scared of you, Ben. Promise..."
They sat like that, the tentacles pulsating against his brother’s palm, and Ben closed his eyes, enjoying the darkness and the sound of their breathing mingling. There was an unusually pleasant tingle in the back of his throat, in his gut, and he was as light as air as Klaus held him.

"They like you."

"Huh?"

"They like you, Klaus," Ben explained, cracking an eye open, "You radiate death, and they...they like basking in it. I...I like it too."

"I'm...glad someone does."

"I'm not scared of you either, Klaus...promise."
It Was One Time

Chapter Summary

Yes, of course, he remembers how he overdosed while he purchases more.

Chapter Notes

The overdose that occurred in the past they talked about specifically. A mirror scenario to a later occurrence. This whole story is mirror resemblance.

Overdose.

It had happened so fast. At first, he was soaring. Flying through clouds, arms outstretched as he let the wind kiss his skin. He was in his early twenties, sick to death of feeling dead, and he took hits off of things that could kill him, to make himself feel better. Ironic, really, feeling alive while pumping poison through your veins. He didn't think about it.

When the high began to fade, he needed more. Felt it like a tingle that burned his nerves. They were like firecrackers, popping with energy too intense to contain. His nails scratched, trying to open them up for the world to see, and it wasn't enough. Everything felt great against his skin, soothing the burn, burning him in different ways, with different types of fire.

He was a bundle of nerves coated in flesh like an android, like mom. He understood it. The energy that pulsed through him in time with his heartbeat.

He took another hit to chase the first, afraid of the flame dying. He didn't want to die.

Bad Trip.

But, the sky darkened. He was falling, wings unable to catch the wind as it whipped past him painfully. Everything was hurting now, skin melting off his bones, and no matter how much he tried to scratch it away, it lingered. An ocean roared beneath him, deafening him, and he was spinning out of control, flailing in a desperate attempt to catch himself.
The seawater was racing up to greet him, holding out its arms to cushion his fall.

He collided with it. It felt solid.

"Klaus?"

He couldn't breathe. He was sucking in water that stung his lungs, and he was going to die. He knew that. Nausea was wrapping fingers around his stomach, squeezing. The world was going dark around the corners of his vision.

He saw Ben. He felt the wood solid underneath his body. He'd fallen, he guessed, but he couldn't remember why.

"Klaus! Hey!"

Seeking, eager hands, they went through him. He wondered if he died if Ben's touch would feel real. Would it be solid? Or would it be like now? Their hands drifting through each other as they desperately tried to hold onto something.

So close, yet so far. Too far. He'd never reach him. He was on fire now, burning alive. Sobs escaped his lips. Ben continued to try and touch him, begging somebody, anybody. Klaus couldn't think. He rolled onto his side, puking out his guts across the floor beside him. Ben was trembling. He looked so very real, so very human at that moment, as tears rolled down cheeks from eyes Klaus wasn't aware could cry.

"...Ben..."

"Fuck. Fuck, I can't..."

Someone must've heard the commotion. Klaus saw the broken glass scattered across the floor, an upturned table, and his body was screaming. Someone was knocking, but he only whined. That must've been enough because he heard someone jiggle the doorknob.
"Klaus, what were you thinking? I told you!"

Klaus focused on Ben, but he was afraid to look at his face. He smiled softly.

"There...it is...the disapp...ointment..."

The world was painted with red and blue, but the siren sounded as though it was underwater. He felt slightly better than before, tasting vomit on his tongue. Bile burned the back of his throat. He wondered if he would ever live again, or breath without the pain. The door was opened, forcefully, but he couldn't remember locking it.

Ben was kneeling next to him, but the paramedics pushed through him.

"Ben...Ben, I want to...be with..."

* * * * * * *

The walk to the pawn shop would have been a pleasant one, had it not been for the glare he was receiving from his brother.

The memory of an accidental overdose struck a nerve with Ben, but Klaus didn't remember any of it. Not in the slightest. He felt his brother scowling quietly as he accepted the cash.

The next location was far less appealing, loud music blaring and making his head ring. He used to partake in these kinds of parties on the regular, but lately, the music seemed too loud, and the people seemed too close.

Ben tried to argue as Klaus handed over the wad of cash he'd received from pawning the expensive ass box their father had hoarded notes in. He'd already tried to convince him to stop, but it hadn't worked. Klaus couldn't fault him for trying. Now, here they were, standing outside a club that thumped like a heartbeat with a man that looked sketchy. "You have no shame, do you?"

"Guess not, little brother."
"We're the same-"

"Who are you talking to," the guy, Adam or something like that Klaus forgot, questioned.

"The ghost of my dead brother," Klaus joked, kind of, and smiled at the man. He shrugged his shoulders, shoved the cash into his pocket, and passed him the candy, minding his own business. He probably assumed Klaus was already as high as a kite, which wasn't true, but it was about to be.

"Stop. Stop doing this to yourself. Don't you get how amazing it is to be alive?! Why are you wasting it," Ben shouted as they walked away, and Klaus slid his hands into the pockets of his coat. It was too hot for it, but he found it rather stylish.

"I know. I'm absolutely awful."

"I remember when you OD'ed, even if you don't."

"Sorry."

"You're not sorry. You're going to do it again."

"You've been trying for how many years now to get me to stop? Maybe one day you'll realize I'm a waste of time."

"No, no, you're not. You never were. Why don't you get that?"

"I just don't."
"Aw, look at the little smiles." The words were mumbled, almost incoherent, as Klaus popped another pill into his mouth, resting it on his tongue and swallowing without a single care in the world. Ben was all too aware of the smiles. They were stamped into the brightly colored poison his brother pumped into his system, a lie boasting happiness like it could make it better, less deadly.

"Klaus..."

"It makes me feel so...alive," Klaus replied, interrupting anything he might've said. They trailed off into silence afterward, and Ben's eyes stayed glued to the remaining pills in the other's palm. Ecstasy. He was too familiar with it, watched it nearly kill his brother while his hands desperately tried to stroke a face they couldn't touch. There was a wall, a barrier between the living and the dead. Ben wasn't able to cross it. Klaus tried.

"Why are you doing this to yourself?"

"Why do you always nag and nag...? Can't I just get some quiet? For once, Ben, come on. Let me enjoy myself, just this once."

"You don't want me around," Ben questioned, heart-wrenching inside his chest as though a fist had closed around it. He didn't want to hear his brother's yes, that's right. Klaus was quiet, watching the light of the lamp. It was dancing, or at least Ben assumed it was.
"Everything feels so good. Like...fire, but...nice. Burning alive without the pain, right? You don't understand what that's like. Every touch...I feel it everywhere. I...I know what you're thinking. I can see it on your face. You're just like dear old daddy, so very disappointed in me. Tell me, Benny, Ben, how disappointed?"

"...what are you talking about?"

"You know! Oh, you know! Tell me! Tell me how disappointing I am. Let me hear it..."

"You're struggling, Klaus. I don't think you're a disappointment."

"Liar! You don't have to lie to me..."

Ben watched as Klaus lied back in his childhood bed. The room looked exactly the same. The walls were painted the same, monotonous white. No character, no personality, save for the little things he'd snuck in here and there. They'd never been normal, not from day one. They were raised to be soldiers, weren't they? Still, this was Ben's room. This was Klaus' favorite place to go. Strange how it seemed so foreign now.

*They lied together watching the light of the nightlight dance across the ceiling.*

"Tell me a story, Ben..."

"Close your eyes."

"Where do you think we went wrong," Klaus pondered, sniffling noisily and shattering the unpleasant silence. A reply didn't come instantly.

"What do you mean?"

"Where do you think...I became like this? You died? All of the...garbage things. There's a lot, I think. Jesus, we always were a mess. Do you think about different outcomes, or is that just me? Oh, Ben, if I could've just...stopped it..."
"What are you rambling about, Klaus?"

"I dunno. I can't remember. I used to think the whole hero thing was cool. All the comics and...we were practically famous...but then it became more about work, and everything started to hurt...and...the hero thing was fake, but the trauma...that was really real."

"...I know."

"I blame daddy dearest."

"I know."

"For you. For me. For all of us, but mostly you."

"...I tried to be stronger..."

"You shouldn't have had to try to be anything. It was so gross and awful and...I don't even want to imagine what you went through while I cried in the dark..."

"Klaus, it wasn't a fucking competition. It still isn't. All of us-"

"Died?"

"No, but..."

"But what? You're right, Benny. Here I am, wasting away, and I don't even feel bad about it. I feel like I'm getting a blowjob from the sun, and you? You have to watch, 'cause what else can you do? I want you to touch me..."

"I can't..."
"I know, but I want you to," Klaus muttered, trailing off into nothing. Always nothing. There was a hole, sucking in pieces of them. They cracked, lost important pieces of who they were, but neither of them had the strength to fight.

"I don't think you're a disappointment. I think you went through shit that was scary, and...maybe, just maybe, you're still going through it. You never moved on, never moved past it..."

"I lost you...I lost you, and..."

"I know, but you didn't. I'm right here."

"Ben..."

Klaus' voice broke, and Ben was trying to ask himself how they'd ended up here. He heard the exact moment his brother broke, and he watched tears spill from ocean eyes that flooded. He wasn't able to wipe them away, and he couldn't hug him, but he wanted to. He desperately wanted to console him, to comfort him and chase away the nightmares. The wall kept him from doing that, kept him from reaching out to feel skin underneath his, and he only watched in defeat.

"I know, Klaus. I'm sorry," Ben whispered.

"I...I don't...I'm so awful. I'm the worst. You know it. I know it. The pills...oh God, they know it, but they help me...they help so much."

"They're just a crutch."

"I need it..."

"...you don't. You know you don't."

"It makes the pain easier," Klaus retorted, setting the pills that were left onto Ben's nightstand before trying to pull himself together. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, murmuring something
about ruined makeup and looking trashy.

"You look fine."

"Why thank you. I feel fantastic."

"Don't lie to me."

"I'm not. Oh no, I feel...ticklish. Hey, hey, Ben. Ben, I have a question...okay? Listen. It's...It's a shitty one. Sorry, but...what did you want to be...?"

"What do you mean?"

"When you were growing up. What did you want to be? Don't say hero. That's stupid, and we both know it."

"I don't know."

"That's not interesting. Try again."

"I just wanted to be with you."

"...hmm...that's better. I like that one," Klaus answered softly as he closed his eyes. Ben stared at him, watching his breathing even out before he reached for the pills instinctively.

He was surprised when his fingers wrapped around them.
Klaus woke up lying in Ben's bed, listening to his heart pound inside his heart. It took him a moment to realize what he actually heard was music, coming from somewhere down the hall. A groan escaped his lips, his high having faded leaving behind only a dull ache and pushing himself up proved to be harder than he initially thought.

He recognized the song, but for some reason, the words didn't register inside his mind. They sounded like gibberish, but he found it comforting. He didn't need to hear the lyrics to know what they were. He thought back to his childhood, thought about the moments he and Ben snuck away to be alone. Together.

God, it would be a far more pleasant morning if his joints didn't feel so stuff. He reached for the nightstand, fingers grazing wood and finding nothing but air. When he glanced at it, he was surprised to find that, yes, that did seem to be the case. That was a downside, of course, because he couldn't get high off of oxygen. He'd tried that already.

"Ben?"

He heard the music thumping through the floor as he lowered his feet onto it, felt the vibrations beneath his soles, and his head throbbed.

"Ben, where did you..."
remember closing it. Jesus, why was the music so loud? Carefully, he got onto his feet and flailed as he tried to regain his balance.

"Turn it down," he muttered weakly as he reached the door, leaning his weight against it to keep from falling forward. Slowly, he wrapped his fingers around the doorknob, and he pried it open.

His heart skipped a beat. Where the hall should've been, there was an alleyway. It was dark overhead, as though the sun had gone down, but he couldn't remember going outside. He stumbled forward, looking over his shoulder to see the street. Where was the door? He reached out, touching air before bringing his hand closer to his face. He flexed his fingers dumbly before turning back in the direction of the alley.

"...whoa..."

Klaus leaned against a brick wall, making his way forward in the dark. He thought it might be cold, but his brain didn't register that fact, like a simulation missing important details. He thought maybe he was dying. Bright lights flashed in front of him, a few yards away. He heard the music more clearly now, watched the air practically vibrate with it.

"Ben?"

Why he was asking for his brother of all people was a mystery. He was beginning to recognize the area, but he couldn't process how he'd gotten there. The club. He hadn't really come here since Ben died, or at least he couldn't remember any of the times he had. Maybe that statement alone should've frightened him, but he wasn't sure what he was thinking as he stumbled forward.

"This...isn't funny, Benny...you know, I really don't feel like partying today. Can't we just go home...?"

"Klaus! Hey, my man," someone said. It wasn't Ben. Klaus glanced toward the location of the sound, nearly puking at what he saw. The person had no face. Just a mask of skin where features should've been. Like he couldn't remember what they looked like. Before he was able to speak, the faceless person grabbed his arm as though they were best buds. He was led into the club. Everyone was faceless, grinding against other uncharacteristic bodies.

Everything was spinning too quickly. He tried to steady himself, but the pull was threatening to knock him down.
"Ben...?!!"

He thought he caught a glimpse of his brother, forcing himself out of the faceless person's vicelike grip. He pushed through the crowd, apologizing by habit and calling for Ben. He broke free of the bodies, and he saw the backdoor hanging slightly ajar.

"BEN!" He saw his brother. He reached out, his fingers grazing the other's shoulder. He paused, jerking his hand back, and Ben turned to look at him. He had a face, and it looked upset.

Klaus jerked awake in bed, gasping and breathing as though he'd just ran a marathon. His heart was pounding. He felt the way it banged against his ribs as he held his hand against his chest. He was covered in sweat, and the sheets felt like the ocean, sticking against his skin unpleasantly when he shifted.

Ben was staring at him with furrowed brows, and he opened his mouth as though trying to say something.

"I'm fine. I..."

"...bad dream?"

"Different than normal, but yeah..."

"...want to talk about it?"

"I don't want you to leave, Ben, so don't ever do that. Okay? We'll have a big problem if you do. I swear I'll...I don't know. I'll do something."

"...I won't leave. I don't think I can even if I want to."

"Do you want to," Klaus questioned quietly, breathing slowly steadying as he wiped perspiration away from his forehead. Ben shook his head in place of a response. "Okay, well...don't."
"I know. I'm here."

"I'm...glad." Klaus looked at the nightstand, brows knitting together as he realized his drugs were gone. He thought back to his nightmare, fingers grazing air, and his eyes met Ben's. Before either of them could speak, Diego threw open the door.

"Morning beautiful. You look like shit."

"Oh, why thank you. I try my best," Klaus replied slowly, tearing his eyes away from Ben's face to look at Diego. The man didn't look amused, leaning against the doorframe.

"Why Ben's room?"

"Why not? It makes me feel comfortable."

"I would think the opposite, but whatever. Come on. Mom made breakfast."

"Oh joy."

"Can it. Fucking eat her food and stop complaining. You look like you've survived on ramen you found in the trash. That shit is already like 86 cents, and you can't afford it. Let's go."

"Fine, fine..."
I See You

Chapter Summary

"What are you looking for?"

Klaus practically threw himself up against his dresser and tossed a smile Ben's way.

Chapter Notes

Glad everyone likes this! As stated before, if you want to draw fanart, feel free!

Go ahead and share the story if you'd like!

IF YOU HAVE ANY FANFICTION IDEAS, OR THINGS YOU'D LIKE TO SEE, TELL ME AND I'LL TRY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Breakfast went smoothly, at first. Klaus didn't say anything for most of it, mostly because the smell of food was threatening to make him hurl, but his siblings filled the void with their own canny remarks. It seemed like none of them noticed that he wasn't contributing because they'd learn to expect that chair empty.

Maybe to them, it was. He wouldn't be surprised to discover that he was a ghost, haunting this place alongside his brother. Ben's place was forever empty to them, and Klaus' constant table setting was chalked up to a bad habit he never broke. None of them tried to address it. They never tried to tell him to stop because they knew he wouldn't. It was so deeply ingrained in his psyche, and only Allison was smart enough to recommend a psychologist behind closed doors.

Still, breakfast was nice save for the constant urge to vomit up everything he'd eaten prior. He was sure the smell would be wonderful, had he not been spiraling out of control slowly, but the food tasted like cardboard against a paper tongue. Klaus wiped perspiration away from his forehead, fingers shaking as he tried to hold his fork.

His siblings noticed, or he thought they might've because the conversation trailed off and died. No one said anything to him, but he felt eyes on him.

"Would it be rude of me to excuse myself," Klaus asked, chapped lips straining to hold a smile.
"Oh? You're polite enough to excuse yourself now," Diego retorted which earned him a slap on the shoulder from Allison.

"Klaus, are you..."

"Of course he is. Fucker must've been soaring last night. Look at him. He's crashing."

"Diego, stop that."

"Stop what? I'm not the one pumping that shit into my body."

"...guys..." Vanya's voice was a new addition. Klaus wasn't sure if she sounded on edge or defensive. Maybe it was the same thing in the end, but he'd read her book. She didn't think very highly of him. That was fine, he wasn't asking. He didn't need approval.

"Klaus? Are you okay?" Someone asked a question he wasn't used to hearing, his eyes falling onto Ben's face. Obviously, it was Ben. He was the only one. Without thinking, he reached up and tried to touch his brother's face. He wasn't surprised when his fingers dipped through skin that wasn't real.

*He's buried underneath the ground, maggots eating away at his skin, and what I'm seeing now is all that's left.*

Ben closed his eyes, falling silent as though he expected the same thing. It still hurt.

"Klaus, what are you..." Allison was interrupted by Diego.

"Isn't that obvious? He's still high."

"Enough," Luther roared, slamming his fists on the table. Klaus squeezed his eyes closed, trying to tune them out. Silence filled his ears like cotton, buzzing bees that killed his senses, and he scrambled to his feet. The sound of the chair hitting the floor was distant, buried underground with Ben.

"If you all don't mind, I really would prefer to vomit somewhere else." He opened his eyes again,
taking in their various looks of disgust. Their mouths moved, but he heard nothing but static.

"Bad reception," he mumbled as he left the room.

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Klaus bit into the skin on the tip of his tongue, chewing mindlessly as he searched around the nightstand. He remembered setting what was leftover down, here, but now it was nowhere to be seen. It couldn't have just vanished, but so far he hadn't found even a trace of it in his pockets, under the bed, under the nightstand, or on top of it.

"Klaus, what are you looking for?"

He practically threw himself against the nightstand, leaning back as casually as he could manage with a smile spread across his lips. Ben arched an eyebrow before crossing his arms across his chest.

"Oh hi, Benny. You know...you know what. The candy! Where is it? I'm sure I-"

"I took them."

"What? Come on. Don't kid around like that. If you were desperate for a good time, you could've asked. No, no, actually...wait, you took them? How? How exactly did you..."

"I picked them up, and I flushed them down the toilet."

"No way! Ben! I don't believe this! I can't believe..."

"I don't know how Klaus. I didn't want you to put any more of that shit into your body, so I...got rid of it. I didn't think I would be able to..."

"You told me you couldn't touch me!"

"To be fair, I didn't touch you, and you already tried. It's...different, somehow," Ben stated softly,
shrugging his shoulders and looking away. Klaus pushed himself off the nightstand, brows furrowed as he stared at his brother. There was an awkward heavy quiet that made everything feel suffocating.

"Hey, hey, but if you touched the pills...if you touched the shitter, then...you were solid. Right? Right, Ben? How did you...do that?"

"I told you. I don't know. It just...happened."

"There's something we're missing! You just...you were solid! I can't believe I missed that..."

"...Klaus, don't."

"Listen, Benny. I have...an idea. It's a really stupid idea, but you'll thank me!"

"I don't want to let you down..."

"You? Let me down? You're the only person in this family who hasn't! Don't worry about that, okay? It's totally fine. You can't let me down, Ben...never. Not in a million years. I just...there must be a way...to make you solid. Is it a roll of the dice or..."

"I just...didn't want you to have...the pills, Klaus. That's all."

Klaus hummed softly before sighing and plopping down on the bed. After a moment, he glanced at his brother, smiled, and patted the space next to him. Ben hesitated before he moved closer and sat down. There was no weight to him, but they'd both grown used to that.

"I'm hurt, Benny, that you would throw away my things...but I'm also amazed and morbidly curious."

"Klaus, just stop. Stop, okay? That shit you're pumping in your system..."

"Hold that thought, okay? I really...have to puke."
Ben watched Klaus stumble toward the bathroom, unable to say anything as he disappeared from view. He listened as his brother heaved violently, and he realized he was useless. He couldn't do anything to help him through his withdrawals or to help him stop. He glanced down at his hands, wishing they were solid before he decided he couldn't stand to watch his brother tear himself apart anymore. With one look down the hall, he left the room.

"Please don't leave, Ben."

"I won't. I'm here."
They all sat in their respective chairs, passing each other looks of pure terror. None of them recognized the bearded man their father escorted inside, but they’d been briefed on what to expect. Still, it didn’t stop any of them from flinching when they saw the gun he was carrying. Sure, Klaus toyed around with the idea of getting tattoos when he was older, a lot older. Definitely not now, when he had to think about the pain that would follow and didn’t agree with the design in the slightest. That was a real kicker.

It made him ask himself if it was even legal, but he was fairly certain he already knew the answer to that question. There was no doubt that their father managed to pull some strings or would if the need arose. He had the feeling that he had no choice, no matter how loud he kicked and screamed. This was something his father had deemed necessary, to show his ownership of these misfits.

As Klaus sat thinking about it, he realized it made quite a bit of sense. No way would the public care to help children that could theoretically kill them without so much as batting an eye. They were powered freaks, right? Something for the public to ogle at and fear.

The Umbrella tattoo basically screamed “if lost, please return”, burning their skin with heated needles. Everyone knew what to expect, but at the same time, they were at a complete loss. Everyone was fiddling anxiously, even if Five wouldn’t admit that. Klaus caught the way he was staring at the man with brows knitted so tight he was worried it would give his brother wrinkles and twist his face up permanently.

That lemon eating expression would be plastered across his face until the day he died, but Klaus figured it was an upgrade from Five's normal features. He would be a good sibling and only laugh a little.
It was all fun and games until his eyes landed on Ben, and he understood that fear was an understatement. Discomfort was present, yes, but he looked like his nerves were coiled up tight enough to burst. He was on the verge of tears, and it just served to make Klaus far more anxious than he had been prior. Sure, it wasn't unlike his brother to be smaller than he was. It wasn't unlike him to tremble and try to fake bravery. There were cracks in his facade.

Luther went first, being Number One and the "leader" figure. Of course, he did. Klaus would've felt joy watching him cry, had it not been for his own overwhelming fear crawling up to rob him of his breath. He stood still, watching blood bubble up across darkened flesh. The man dabbed it away before continuing.

This was definitely not legal.

The air smelled stagnant, but that was all in his mind. He was sure of that. He stared, feeling as though his soul abandoned him. He wondered if he'd still sense the pain as an empty shell.

It took a little over thirty minutes for Luther's tattoo to be done, and Klaus saw the ring of red that outlined it. Puffy, gross. Bloody. Why did he ever think getting a tattoo would be fun?

Diego was next. He cried too, but his tears were far less pleasant. He shrugged off their mother's attempt to console him, and he tried to pretend like he wasn't crying, but the tears left streaks of irritated skin along his cheeks. Klaus' bottom lip was trembling now, and he wished he was able to curl into a ball. Disappear. Five was lucky because he really could if he wanted to, but he figured their "father" would only catch him later.

Ownership, right? That's what this was about. Had to show the world who the freak kids belonged to.

Ben was squirming, fidgeting with his pants until Klaus was worried he'd wear holes into them. He figured it'd be better than holes in their skin.

God, the smell of iron was too familiar.

Eventually, he was being called. Number Four. 00.04. Never Klaus, just a number. Allison was staring at him with her tearstreaked face, and he hadn't even seen her go.
"Number Four."

There it was again, his worth. Only numbers. They were all only numbers, not children. Not flesh and blood.

Numbers didn't fucking bleed.

He was called again, and finally, he was sitting in the chair. It was sticky. His skin stuck to the leather as though it had been glued down. The man was giving him a look, but he didn't understand what expression it was trying to convey. His eyes met Ben's. Locked onto those chocolate brown irises. He noticed his brother's brows dip downward ever so slightly.

The man was wiping his arm down with something cool. The smell of it stung his nose and brought tears to his eyes before the pain even started. He heard his heart pounding in his ears and the whirring of the needle. Then, there was this burning sensation that singed his skin.

He was staring at Ben, focusing on his brother, and his vision blurred as tears blinded him. He was sobbing which only served to make Ben's fidgeting worse. They watched one another, and Klaus tried to focus on anything other than the burning. His skin was on fire. He was going to burn alive. When he looked, he saw the blood. Bright red against the black. He was spilling out for all the world to see, and he wondered if the ink would stain his veins.

It lasted for far too long. He felt the man outline the design. He felt him color it in. Too long. Klaus lost track of time. By the time it was done, he had no more tears to cry. His eyes were swollen and sore, throbbing in time with the marking carved into his flesh.

Ben began to sob before he even started.
Chapter Summary

"Are you okay?"

The words sounded foreign coming from her.

Chapter Notes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sabUcQ5EPHY

Yes, a sibling is going to ask Klaus if he's fucking okay. Because fuck them, that's why.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbSeWGcG4yE

"Are you okay?" That was Ben for you, dead but always worrying about him.

"Are you okay?" Sometimes hearing it got annoying, that was for sure.

"Klaus, are you okay?" He never told the truth when he was asked, or maybe he did. It was always thinly veiled by sarcasm, but the pain was painfully obvious.

"Are you okay?" Why couldn't he be honest for one second? Why couldn't he just tell him how he really felt?

"Hey, you okay?" That was a new one. That didn't sound like Ben, not in the slightest. Klaus peeked an eye open, glancing in the direction of the voice. Allison had been tapping on his door. He could tell by the way her hand was lifted up, fingers folded to reveal knuckle pressed against wood. She was staring at him, leaning against the entryway.

"Huh," he questioned, only serving to look like an absolute moron. It wouldn't be the first time, and he was positive it wouldn't be the last.

"I'm asking if you're okay, Klaus," she replied softly, lowering her arm to rest at her side and readjusting her posture. She seemed awkward, normally so sure of herself, and Klaus figured it was
because she didn't know how to approach him. That's right. It was always about the others. He wasn't normally included in that sibling camaraderie.

"Oh yes, I'm perfect. Awesome. Fantastic. Doing amazing, really. Stupendous. I'm running out of word ideas, but you get it."

"Klaus, you're not any of those things, and you know it. You're holding up in your room like it's a fortress which means you're not downstairs annoying anyone. That's not...like you."

"I'm honored, really, but I'm having a great time here...by myself."

"Alright. Spill."

"I have nothing to spill!"

Allison arched an eyebrow, waiting expectantly for him to begin talking. Klaus watched her closely. She was the picture of sass, challenging him for his title as "Queen". Her hip was cocked, hands resting on them as she patiently stood there. He almost wanted to cry. He felt the heat beginning to curl up in his chest, burning his lungs and suffocating him. He broke, a small sob escaping his lips before he had the chance to refrain. This startled both of them.

"...what happened?"

"You won't believe me. I'm almost positive of that, actually."

"That's never stopped you from speaking before."

"Yeah? Well, this really hurts, okay?!"

"Klaus, okay. I understand. Tell me," Allison whispered softly as she sauntered over to his bed. He regarded her silently, bowing his head. He was almost surprised when she weighed the bed down.

"So, spill."
"I see Ben," he answered after a moment, looking around the room with furrowed brows. She followed his gaze before sighing. Before she could say anything, Klaus continued. "Except, not right now. I think...I might've upset him because I haven't seen him around for a few days now."

"Well...where is he?"

"I don't know. I have no idea how to reach him if he's not...here," Klaus explained, frowning as he thought back to the first time he saw Ben. "He showed up one day...after he kicked the bucket. Even when I was soaring, you know. I couldn't get rid of him. He was always just there...and I got really used to it. It's weird that it's been so...Ben-free."

"Okay, wait. Let me get this straight. You have trouble conjuring the dead when you're...high, right? That's what you said about Dad."

"You're understanding. Dad refused to talk to me. Why do you think I do it? I don't have to talk to them when I'm...not in the right mind. That's good enough for me."

"But?"

"...Ben watches all the time. He always complains when I try to shut them up. He really does disapprove of my choices, but I need it. It's not my fault that he doesn't like my choices..."

"Klaus, you think he enjoys watching you waste away? You probably won't listen to me. I don't expect you too. Listen, it makes sense, doesn't it? He doesn't want to watch you waste away or die. I doubt he wants you to join him...wherever he is..."

"No, no, no...okay. Look, you don't have to tag team me," Klaus whined, pouting and looking away from his sister. She shook her head silently and stared up toward the ceiling. It was obvious how hard she was trying to figure out what to say, but she wasn't Ben. She didn't have a way with words, not when it came to him. He never did listen, but then again that wasn't new when it came to Ben either.

They all had their fair share of problems. How could they not? They'd grown up believing their father cared little for them, beyond their abilities. They were assets, not children. Of course, that came with emotional baggage. They'd dealt with it in different ways. Allison knew that. She remembered being a child, watching her siblings hurt in their own respective ways. She remembered
being led to Vanya deep underground, hidden behind a submarine door.

She remembered Klaus missing for days on end, and Father telling them he was fine. He was never fine. She watched him try to live normally, but everyone heard him screaming when he had nightmares. It was the same for Ben.

They'd all been forced to do things they didn't particularly like. Though, she supposed she couldn't complain. Her powers got her what she wanted. It was her own fault for messing things up. Ben and Klaus though. They'd never had a particularly fun power, cursed with whatever horrors they experienced or felt. Allison supposed it made sense that losing Ben, the one person that could understand where Klaus was coming from, was the catalyst that sent him spiraling into his drug-fueled frenzy.

Now, she was hearing Ben was back. The dead things that wandered around in his vision faded when he pumped harder, deadlier things down his throat, or in through his veins, and Ben was always there. It brought up questions she doubted he had the answers to.

"So, Ben's gone...?"

"...once again, yep! Nail on the head, or whatever. He hasn't talked to me for...three days now? That's longer than I can remember. Man, it's so weird not seeing him everywhere I go."

"Even the bathroom?"

"Everywhere. Though, sometimes he pops out of my mind to give me privacy. Come on. It's Ben. He's not a pervert."

"But you don't know where he is now?"

"I have no idea. I miss my buddy!"

"If you don't mind me asking, Klaus...what did you do?"

"...Ecstasy. I think. I can't remember. Oh, that brings up a weirder topic. You definitely won't believe
this, 'cause I really didn't! But voila! *They're gone,*" Klaus exclaimed, motioning toward Ben's room down the hall.

"I'm sorry?"

"Ben. Now, this is weird. Okay? Yep. Just listen to this. Our dear dad had this...exquisite box. I may have...snatched it...to pawn it for money?"

"Oh, Klaus..."

"I know! I know. Shame on you, Klaus. That was *dad's,* Klaus. No respect for the dead, Klaus. But listen, okay? Listen. I did it. I bought a whole bunch of ecstasy. As much as I could. Ben was so unhappy. Scolded me the entire way home like 'that stuff kills you', yadda yadda. I listened, I did. But the urge was just...right there. So I scratched. I did. I popped some in my mouth, and man was I soaring...but that's not the weird part. That's me. I do that all the time. The weird part, get this, was Ben."

"What about him?"

"I wanted to do more. I had more. I had like...more. I can't remember how much more, but I did have more. Leftovers I didn't take. You know. I took them in Ben's room, and I left what was left on his nightstand, except -are you listening?- when I woke up, they were gone."

"What do you mean?"

"I had this crazy dream that I was flying, and Ben was there. He was shaking his head and all that Ben stuff. But the scary part was that he was leaving, and I couldn't reach him. He was gone..."

"Okay?"

"They were gone, Allison! The drugs...I spent so much money on...and when I tried to find them 'cause I thought they fell on the floor or something, Ben says he threw them away."

"Is this still part of the dream?"
Klaus groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose as he tried to figure out what he was trying to say. "No...no that was real. I woke up from the dream panicking 'cause I expected Ben to really be gone. He wasn't, but the drugs were. He told me he threw them away and when I asked him how he had no idea. Then we got into a teensy weensy itty bitty argument. Ben kept trying to educate me on the dangerous uses of drugs. I had to throw up. When I came back, he was gone."

"Sounds like you upset him."

"That's what worries me! Normally, he tolerates me and...he doesn't just leave. What if he doesn't come back? What if it's something I did, and I can't figure out how to fix it? This is a disaster. I don't think I can bear not hearing from him. He was my wingman. He was always around. I thought I lost him for good, okay? When he died...and there was that weird kinda hole left behind I couldn't feel...but he came back, and everything was kinda okay. It was all good 'cause I could still talk to him about things, even if he could only do so much. He still...he was still Ben, and...I don't want him to stay gone."

Allison listened to her brother patiently before humming in thought. She turned her attention to him and gently touched his arm, her eyes glued to him. "Are drugs more important to you than Ben is?"

"...well..."

"Klaus," she replied warningly.

"No! No, they're not. What a stupid question. They're both good company, but I do enjoy having Ben around..."

"You know, Ben doesn't want to watch you hurt yourself. All throughout our childhood, he was always watching you hurt. He couldn't do much then. How do you think he feels when he can do absolutely nothing now? It's selfish, Klaus. You expect him to sit there and watch you drown in poison? I told you. He doesn't want to see you end up where he is."

"...yes, but I-"

"I know it's hard to quite an addiction, Klaus. I don't expect you to just magically fix this overnight, but you need to try. If it's the drugs or Ben, which would you rather have?"
Klaus said nothing. He didn't trust himself to speak.
He saw a blue, navy blue. The reds and whites really did tie it all together. The black made it look more official. Uniform, across the board. Except for the skirt, that was unique. They resembled preppy private school attendees, not superheroes in training. Ugh, and the term superhero? It sounded so wrong coming from everyone's mouths. They weren't superheroes. They were children. Most people were too afraid of them to stand up for their wellbeing though. If a job went wrong, and they were hurt because of it, it would be no great loss.

Maybe there was a point in time when it was fun, but the appeal was beginning to wear off. Their father was adamant about teaching things they didn't want to learn. They wanted to be kids. They wanted to have friends and learn actual lessons in a classroom surrounded by fellow peers. All they had was each other, and the crowds of people that lined the front of their home just to catch a glimpse of the freaks.

They were told to walk with their eyes peeled, glued straight ahead. They were something to be ogled at, a marvel. There was nothing marvelous about it, or that's what Klaus thought at least. He wasn't sure the others shared the same sentiment, but he had the feeling most of them did. It was getting old for everyone. Eventually, the public would lose interest, and they wouldn't be needed.

Maybe then they could live normally. That thought tasted like lemons, bitter and hard to swallow. Klaus knew better than to hope for something so beautiful.

He realized he was being watched as he was led along in a straight line. Uniform, always, like robots. They were machines. Still, he broke the rules. He glanced toward the crowd, and his eyes met a boy's. He had a sudden thought that perhaps they weren't better than all of the individuals standing around to watch them walk. They were people, that was it. They all bled the same, and the pain still hurt, so why did everyone expect him to bleed for them?
The boy was staring at him with a look he didn’t understand. Klaus thought he might be the same age as him.

“What’s it like to be a soldier,” he heard him ask, but he didn’t have a chance to answer. He was shoved forward, hissed at by someone, and his eyes were torn away from the boy’s. That was something. He couldn’t stop thinking about it. They were soldiers. That’s what they were. Used as shields, until the pain was so bad they bit into their own teeth.

Sometimes their mother stitched them up, and Klaus would count the silvery scars left on his brothers’ bodies. Across Allison’s dark skin. They stood out the most, and he always traced them with his eyes.

They threw him into the front lines, and he panicked because what could he do? The dead would never help him, not without a price. He had nothing to give.

They were inside the manor, but he barely registered it. The doors closed with a heavy thud, and he stayed in his thoughts until Ben touched his arm. The sudden feeling startled him out of his musing, and his eyes quickly found his brother’s. The look asked him if everything was alright, and his only choice was to lie.

“I’m okay.”

Ben opened his mouth to say something, but he was interrupted by a louder voice.

“Number Four, which part of ‘eyes forward’ has you so horribly confused?”

“S-Sorry, I just-”

“No excuses. I thought it to be a rather simple order. Did you not?”

“I did.”

“Then I repeat my query.”
"It won't happen again, sir..."

"Very well. Off with you."

It was the sternness. There was no semblance of understanding inside those eyes, the eyes of their "father". Klaus would rather be anywhere else, but the fear was fading. Instead, it was replaced with a bitterness that twisted his guts until he wanted to scream. He wanted to shout from the rooftops about his pain, about being human, but as poetic as it sounded, it would solve nothing.

He bit his tongue and left when he was excused. Tossed aside like trash. He'd heard his father mumble about him, about his disappointing progress. It was hard to grow when everyone stunted you with walls they built to trap you inside. The mausoleum's ceiling was only so high.

Ben watched him go.

Ben, Father's second disappointment, pursed his lips and clenched his fists.

Ben, The Horror, his brother, the one with more scars lining his skin than any of them, could do nothing.

That was how it went. Even Goliath had his David, had his stone. Even Goliath died. But it left Klaus wondering which role he played. Was he Goliath, or David? And who filled the other part?
Candy, Candy

Chapter Summary

Their lips touched, and it was wrong. But, it felt right.

Chapter Notes

WARNING: UNDERAGE
But, nothing too awful happens...and they're teenagers, so it's not bad.

WARNING: DRUGSSSSSS
Duh

It was after an important mission. They were all smiling for the camera, and Klaus realized he didn't like girls. What brought that thought on initially was unknown. Maybe it had something to do with the way that a girl in the audience was looking at him or the way her brother shouldn't have been. Their eyes met, and he was sure that if he were his brothers he'd love it. He'd smile back, maybe even get yelled at for waving just as the camera flashed, cementing that moment in history. But, he saw that girl. Only a girl. He didn't feel anything.

His other siblings were already exploring behind closed doors, he was sure, except for the possible exception of Five. He'd never really been one to care about childish things like that. He was always so far ahead anyway. Diego made his accomplishments obvious, though it was true. None of them had much time to explore with anyone else. They didn't have friends. They weren't allowed to. Crushes were foolish.

Still, he felt the girl's eyes glued to his face. He sensed that she might've liked him, but he didn't feel anything when it came to her. She was only a girl in the crowd, but his gaze trailed over to her brother, or he at least assumed they were related because they stood close to one another, and they looked similar with their blonde hair and baby blue eyes. The boy was staring at him too, except the heat in his look was different than his sister's. It made Klaus' throat tighten, and he barely registered that he was being yelled at to face forward.

He pried his eyes away from his face and faced the camera. He still felt their gazes burning holes in his skin, but his heart skipped a beat when he noticed the boy watching him with an expression he could only describe as hungry. Maybe he was mistaken. Maybe it was directed toward Allison. She was pretty. He wasn't.
Klaus looked toward his sister, and he saw her smile at Luther. He faded into the background, heart racing as he panicked internally and looked away. Ben met his stare, and he found that his heart didn't slow down.

With that, with the waving and smiling done, they were escorted away. Klaus' eyes met blue again, and he found that he was thinking about the boy's lips as his gaze fell onto them. They looked soft.

Home was bleak, as always, and Klaus was afraid of what he'd learned about himself. Quietly, he folded inward and tried desperately to convince himself that, yes she was pretty, but it wasn't working. That girl in the crowd stuck out to him as completely average. Normal. Boring. But, her brother looked exactly like her, save for the masculine features toned and shaped by boyhood, and Klaus thought he was something special.

It was because of the boyish nature, he thought, that he found that person beautiful. He didn't want soft delicate features. No, he wanted angled hard lines, and he wanted muscle not curve. He could only picture the expressions his siblings would have if he told them. Diego would be the worst, he imagined. Not because he meant to be, but because he didn't understand. Diego liked girls, a lot. He made that obvious, and when girls liked him back, he bragged about it.

Strangely enough, he didn't think Allison or Five would care. Five would think it was stupid that he was worried about it, and Allison would tell him that he was allowed to be himself. Vanya could react either way, really. She was a wildcard.

Luther never did try hard enough to care about anything Klaus did, whether that was a good thing or a bad thing, but he took after their father. God knows their father would be disturbed.

And Ben?

There was a tap on his door, and he only partially acknowledged Ben as he walked in.

"Are you okay, Klaus?"

"...I think I like boys," Klaus blurted in reply before he could stop himself. He scolded himself for not assessing how Ben might react. His brother stood there, blinking slowly as he processed what was told to him. Klaus was afraid that he'd leave, but he closed the door instead.
"Oh."

"Yeah..."

"Want to...talk about it?"

"What am I supposed to say, Ben?"

"Why do you like them," Ben questioned softly as he sat down beside him. He avoided his eyes, but that wasn't new. He'd always been awkward around his siblings, always looked worried, so Klaus wasn't stressing that.

"I don't know..."

"It's not bad if you do, you know. You can like whoever you want, but...you have to like them for the right reasons..."

"I think they look nice...okay? It's really sudden, and I'm not sure what to think about it. I've never kissed anyone, so maybe I'm just mistaken. How could I know what I like if I've never...done anything like that before?"

"You can have an inkling, I guess. Boys catch your attention more than girls do...right?"

"Yeah, what about with you? What catches your eye more...?"

Ben's face turned a bright red, and he stuttered a bit before he fell quiet. "Not what...who. I have someone I like, but...it's stupid. I don't...I'm not really thinking about the...gender thing."

"Benny, you like someone! That's so cool. Don't tell dad! I bet he'd give you some speech about how crushes slow you down. Do I know them?"

"Don't...worry about that. Hey, Klaus, if you could kiss a boy to...I don't know, experiment, would you?"
"Probably. If I had a boy to kiss."

"...Klaus, what do you think about Luther and Allison?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Come on. It's obvious what they do when they're alone together. They really like each other...they're not very good at hiding it. Everyone knows it, except maybe dad. I know you've realized it too. What do you think about it?"

"Why are you asking me that?"

"I want to know."

"...it's weird, but it's not...too bad. We're not blood-related, so I guess it shouldn't be that weird, you know? I don't think it's really weird. It's kinda strange 'cause I always saw them as my siblings, but...what's so weird about it 'cause we're really just...a bunch of people living underneath a roof together. We're not connected by blood, so liking each other shouldn't be...frowned at. We didn't ask to be brought together. I mean, come on. Ben, why did you want to know that?"

"Don't hate me."

"What?"

Ben leaned closer in lieu of answering him. Klaus had no time to wrap his mind around what was happening before their lips touched, and his brain shortcircuited. He swore he smelled the nerves frying as the other boy pressed closer. Part of him screamed that it was wrong because he did view him as a brother, and he was a boy, but the other part loved the thrill that came with it.

Ben's lips were soft.
The Dead Rot Away

Chapter Summary

I thought you'd stay.

Chapter Notes

There is a theory my mom made...that makes sense.
-Klaus Killed Ben On Accident-
1. The dead that followed Cha Cha and Hazel were killed by them, they just couldn't see them. Ben follows Klaus.

2. All of the bodies had their injuries. Ben's power would've left obvious injuries if it killed him. There are no wounds (that we know of). What kills without injury? Overdosing.

3. Klaus started taking drugs at a young age because he was afraid of his power. So was Ben.

4. Ben hates drugs. He HATES them. Possibly because they killed him and could kill Klaus too. He also seems to know the stages of withdrawal well. "It's almost over, Klaus."

5. Ben tells Klaus to stop Luther because "He's not ready". Klaus responds "Is anybody? Was I? Were you?" Ben gives him a look and Klaus replies "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Of course, you weren't ready to die"

6. WHAT IF WHEN ALLISON TOLD VANYA HIS DEATH WAS HORRIBLE, SHE DIDN'T MEAN GRUESOME. SHE MEANT SHE HAD TO WATCH HIM DELVE DEEPER INTO ADDICTION BEFORE IT KILLED HIM?

7. Klaus never got over it.

NOW, THIS COULD BECAUSE THEY'RE "RELATED" AND HAVE A SPECIAL CONNECTION...BUT WHO KNOWS! I'm angry at this theory cause it's sad.

"How am I supposed to apologize to him if he won't listen to me?"

It was the first thing that anyone had said in a while. They were all sitting there, silent. Allison had her arms crossed across her chest as though daring someone to say something, and frankly, Klaus couldn't figure out how they'd ended up here. Something about a "family intervention", but he
wondered if it was going as well as she'd planned. Luther looked dumbfounded, Diego annoyed, and Vanya sat with her face in her hands.

All various expressions of disbelief, really.

"Wait, hold on. What the hell is happening here," Diego finally asked.

"This is a family intervention," Allison explained, narrowing her eyes slightly. Klaus noticed, but he wasn't sure anyone else did. Vanya certainly didn't.

"Okay, yeah. I understood that part. We've tried that before, remember? It doesn't really work when it comes to Klaus. How many times have you been to rehab again?"

"So, what are you saying? We should just let him die? Like Ben," Allison interjected.

"Oh, ho, ho. No. You don't get to fucking do that. We all know whose fault that was."

"Ben doesn't seem to share that sentiment, Diego."

"That's what the problem says!"

"Klaus can see Ben, right? That's what he told us. That's what he told you. Allison, do you believe him," Luther questioned, his eyes meeting his sister's. Klaus knew he'd blindly follow her almost anywhere.

"Well, yeah."

"Oh great," Diego added, rolling his eyes.

"I'm right here, guys," Klaus muttered. All eyes fell on him, even Vanya's, and he fell quiet.
"His entire power involves talking to the dead. I think it makes sense," Vanya stated softly, lowering her hands finally. Klaus was almost worried she'd be sitting like that for a few hours.

"Oh. I forgot. A power he sucks at."

"Diego!"

"No, no, it's alright Allison. By all means, why don't you try it then, since I'm so bad at it? I'd love to see the results."

"Klaus."

"You think you're so smart, don't you?"

"Can you guys stop," Allison shouted before pinching the bridge of her nose, "if he can't really see Ben, who does it hurt? We can't see him anyway."

Everyone fell quiet, bowing their heads. She sighed after a moment, lowering her arm to rest at her side.

"This isn't about that. Not really. This is an intervention to help him stop drugs. For Fuck's sake. If you were in his shoes, we'd help you too, Diego. Loathe as we are to admit it. What are we supposed to do? Pretend we don't know him until he winds up dead in a ditch, and we have to have another funeral? I'm done with death, okay? Can't we all agree on that much? We've all made stupid mistakes. We're still human. We might not have messed up on a colossal Klaus level-"

"Hey!"

"-but we've still messed up. Sometimes siblings need siblings to kick their ass into shape. So, stop being a piece of shit or you're next on that list. I got it. Klaus has let us down a few times in the past, saying he'll get clean and falling back into old habits, but we aren't going to abandon him. He's still our brother. And if he says Ben's ignoring him, then maybe he is, but I can't really yell at him. Can I?"
Diego huffed, his eyes falling onto Klaus before trailing over to Allison. "Fine. Whatever. This is just another shitshow waiting to happen, but I'm here to help, I guess."

"Thank you, Diego," Allison answered wearily. It was clear that she was exhausted, her shoulders slumped as though carrying invisible weight.

Luther nodded his head, which she understood to be in agreement.

"Look, I don't know...how much this is going to work, but I can try to help out. I've never...had a drug problem, so I can't say I know how to fix it, but I can be moral support," Vanya piped up. She was always so small in comparison to everyone else, both in body size and language. "I'm here for you, Klaus...whatever that means."

"This is all fine and dandy, really. I appreciate it, but I miss Ben."

Everyone stared, but no one said anything. They weren't sure how to help with that part of things.

"...maybe if you get clean, he'll come around?"

"...I hope so..."
Candy Coated Veins

Chapter Summary

Perspiration clung to his shirt as though it was a long lost love. The sheets wrapped their arms around him, holding him too tight. He couldn't breathe.

Perspiration clung to his shirt as though it was a long lost love it couldn't bear to part from. His bedsheets wrapped their arms around him, holding him too tight. He couldn't breathe. His ribs threatened to give in with every forced wheeze. The lights were off. It was too dark. Closing his eyes only served to make it worse. If he screamed, he doubted anyone would hear him as he swallowed in the darkness and drowned.

His heart was pounding inside his throat, in his ears, and he was choking on his own life as it passed him by. Tremors racked his body, and he curled up in fetal position trying to make the pain stop. The world was made of shadow, and they danced around him laughing, jeering and pointing fingers at him. Sobs escaped his lips, but they wouldn't stop screaming.

When he opened his eyes, everything was wrong.

"Klaus."

"I don't...I don't want to be here..."

The mausoleum's walls were made of smooth carved stone, cold to the touch. They dug into his fingertips when he clawed at them, breaking fingernails as shrieks tore themselves free from his vocal cords.

"Klaus."

He was a child again. He felt like a child again, so small and fragile. His body was shaking violently, and he was going to throw up. The walls were closing in. He'd be crushed at this rate. Too fast, he couldn't keep up. With another sob, he slid down the stone and hugged his knees to his chest.

"I don't want to talk to you! GO AWAY!"
There was rattling, and then a thud as something hit the ground just out of sight. When it rolled toward him, he saw bright orange. A bottle, plastic and perfect. He hesitantly reached a hand for it.

A limb shot out of the shadows, wrapping fingers around it before he could grab it. He screamed, pushing himself back against the stone hard enough to split skin. The pills were yanked back into the darkness, and he could hear something struggling to open it. He heard it swallowing.

Tears were streaming down his cheeks. The empty bottle was thrown back. It bounced, smacking against the ground before rolling to his feet.

"Klaus..."

"Please, don't hurt me...please, please, please..."

Something shook him awake. He squealed, lashing out and flailing as the sheets refused to release him. Whatever touched him took a step back, and a moment passed before Klaus registered where he was. His racing heart slowly calmed itself, and he sat gasping for air. There was no mausoleum. Nothing lurking in the shadows.

"Are you...okay?"

"...Ben," Klaus whispered as if saying the name would make his brother disappear again.

"You're going through withdrawals..."

"Gee, what gave that away?"

"You look like shit."

"Thanks. You're not so bad yourself..."
There was silence, and Klaus quickly sat up to squint into the darkness. He saw his brother's silhouette and sighed, relief flooding his veins. Then, it occurred to him.

"You shook me awake?"

"...I did?"

"I think so. I felt it."

"...I don't know what's happening," Ben admitted, "I can...touch you, but only sometimes. I can't tell who's responsible for it or how it's happening...just that it is. It's...almost scary."

"Oh, okay."

"That's all you have to say?"

"What am I supposed to say? You disappeared, now here you are. Touching me. I'm sorry I made you upset...this is a bitch, okay? You better be happy because I'm not liking the fever dreams I'm getting for this."

"You're still shaking."

"...do something about it then..."

Ben hesitated and reached out a hand. Klaus was disappointed when it went through him. "I can't. I'm sorry. You're trying to get sober for me..."

"...how did you know? Why did you come back? I thought for sure I was getting the silent treatment."

"You were...calling for me. I thought something bad might've happened...but, knowing you..."
"Don't leave again, or I'm giving you the silent treatment, and you won't like that. You missed it. The whole family got together talking about an intervention. I nearly broke like...I dunno, eight times. It's really hard, okay? I miss it, so much. Don't be mad at me, but withdrawals are really kicking my ass here..."

"...you can do it, Klaus. You're stronger than I am. You can do it."

"Don't say that. I don't like it when you tell me things like that...just...God, I want you to hug me so I don't have to think. Ben, I'm sorry. I should've kissed you back..."

"What?"

"When we were kids and you kissed me, I panicked because I liked it. And I really regret not kissing you back. I'm just stupid and only realized it after you were gone, and..."

Without thinking about it, Ben pulled Klaus into a hug. It lasted for a brief second before Klaus fell through him. They didn't even have time to be surprised before it ended with his face pressed against the bed.

But, that brief second felt like Heaven.

"I wish I could kiss you."
Where did it all go wrong? That's often what he asked himself when he thought back to earlier years when being a superhero was fun. He had been a naive kid, growing up in a home that was anything but. Once upon a time, people would cheer them on because what would they do without them? Once upon a time, he thought he knew himself better than anyone else did.

Then, the pain started. Starting in his stomach, spreading outward. They wouldn't stop, shifting underneath his flesh as though searching for something. Hungry. Breathing. The way they seemed to seek out his brother made him feel petrified. He didn't want Klaus anywhere near him because they always seemed to reach for him, pushing up against his skin and screaming to be let out. It took every ounce of strength to keep the monsters contained. Still, his brother had a bad habit of melting his resolve.

A smile tossed here, and glance tossed there. The way his body moved when he walked away from his door, which he'd left ajar after poking his head in. Hips beckoning Ben to follow. He did it on purpose. He crawled underneath Ben's skin and made a home among the writhing mass that already lived there.

Ben was melting slowly. He knew he was. He could feel the way he fell apart underneath the weight of everything, and the burden always seemed to linger over his head like a storm cloud. He figured it would still be there even after he died. That was what he was afraid of, anyway. Little bits and pieces of him were gobbled up by the nothingness, and he was terrified that he'd end up faceless.

God, why did he exist?

He remembered when they used to laugh together, as siblings, as kids. Those times had been simpler. Both of them shared whispered secrets in the middle of the night, too afraid to sleep, but there to scare each other's fears away.

Now, Ben followed him down the hall with a hunger he couldn't quite explain. And THEY wanted. THEY craved. Klaus was a siren, but he wasn't sure Klaus realized that he'd tied a noose around his neck, using it as though it were a leash to tug him along. He watched the way his brother's body moved with a gaze that contained everything but sibling love.
Ben wanted, but he couldn’t have.

THEY were seriously starting to hurt, writhing angrily when he wouldn’t take. He wanted to take, but he was afraid.

They were still kids. The thoughts running through his head weren’t supposed to bother him. They weren’t supposed to be about his brother. They weren’t supposed to be that vivid, waking him up and keeping him up drenched in cold sweat he wished belonged to his brother. He wasn’t supposed to be sick.

Klaus glanced over his shoulder. They were inside his room, and it smelled like cinnamon. Spice. Something that stung his nostrils.

Ben drowned inside his eyes.

They were a hazy green, because of the drugs.

Ben didn’t blame him. Ben enjoyed the kick, the burn, the way it hurt. He swallowed them down right beside his brother, and they lied on the floor, staring at the ceiling for hours. If it killed him, he’d enjoy the rush. He never thought about the consequences when his head was spinning, and his eyes stayed glued to Klaus’ lips. He wanted to drag his tongue over them, to taste if they were as sweet as they looked. He wanted to feel his brother on his lap, pressing their bodies together until they forgot to breathe.

The way his brother’s fingers danced across his skin made electricity dance across his nerves, and he realized right then and there that he wanted to fuck him.

It was disgusting. He blamed the drugs.

When Klaus ran fingers through his hair, and he got hard, he blamed the drugs for that too. He didn’t want to be honest, didn’t want to admit that he wanted to shove his hands down his brother’s pants. It would mean that he was a pervert. He’d be admitting that there was no saving him. It would be admitting that it wasn’t just puberty messing with him. He genuinely wanted Klaus on his teeth.
The creatures living inside him were slowing down, the high affecting more than his brain. Everything felt light and soft, heat prickling his skin pleasantly. Klaus was on him, his weight reassuring and pressing his body against him. Their lips didn't touch, but Ben was suffocating. He was on fire.

"Ben..."

Holy shit, Klaus was on top of him, their groins pressed too close together, and Ben choked. His brother was hard too. He wanted to see, wanted to feel. He wanted to die.

"Hh?"

"I'm horny."

"Oh." A forced swallow. "Do you always get like this?"

"Yeah..."

"Oh."

Their bodies fit together, and Klaus smiled his smile. Ben's head was spinning, and he wanted to kiss it off his lips. He almost admitted it when something fell down the hall. They threw themselves in opposite directions, and the only sound Ben heard was the pounding of his own heart.

It throbed.
Shaking Fingers

Chapter Summary

He understood. He felt the high.

Chapter Notes

Thanks to anyone still around.

TW: Suicide, Suicide Attempt, Overdosing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNEybPd2C3s

His fingers shook as he picked at loose strands in his pants, tearing them impulsively as tremors crawled across his spine. The air smelled sweet, like cinnamon, like spice. He inhaled softly, breathing in the scent of his brother as he buried his face in the sheets. The bed was empty, cold, and Ben was aware that he was alone.

Klaus was not here. Not anymore.

He said they'd be together, said they would get out of this together, yet...he'd already freed himself from his manacles while Ben's weighed him beneath the ocean's surface. Klaus watched him drown while he stood dry.

He was free. Ben respected that. He knew that he was a heavy burden to carry, but everything still smelled like him. A sweet, painful scent that made his chest ache. The selfish part of him wished that Klaus was still here, beside him, but then he'd be suffering. Ben would watch the light in his eyes die. The light in his own eyes had already died.

Klaus was afraid. Ben understood that. He was right there beside him, figuratively this time. He didn't blame his brother for abandoning him, but he missed him. He missed the constant smiles, the way Klaus' fingers would twirl around strands of his hair, the way he could sleep when his brother was lying right beside him.

Now, the dark was terrifying.
He’d never understood it before. Klaus always cried about the monsters that roamed when the lights were off, and Ben had a feeling he was one of them.

Now, his bed was empty. There was no Klaus. There was no comfort. Only missions and dried blood underneath fingernails. He forgot whose it was.

Sometimes, when the house was quiet, he would sneak down to ogle the portrait of all of them together. The closest they'd ever come to a family was when they stood together for that picture. It was hanging too high. His fingers couldn't reach Klaus.

He never could though.

The bed was empty.

Ben rolled onto his back and stared up toward the ceiling, silent tears burning his skin as they rolled down without permission. He sniffled, struggling to breathe. The house was dead, no screaming. No laughter. It was empty now. When he closed his eyes, he saw images of them running through the hall. It had always been too loud, and their mother always tried to control their rambunctiousness with a soft smile.

The highs weren't enough. The moment they began to fade, pain leaked in through the cracks.

He understood the truth though. There was no point in denying it. He'd never leave this place. This place would kill him. Klaus would rather be anywhere else, living his life, where Ben couldn't weigh him down.

THEY writhed like his pain was delicious, and maybe it was. He didn't taste for them. Still, he knew They missed Klaus too. They showed it in the way they pushed up against his skin, desperately reaching for something that was no longer there.

Ben knew, even if he didn't want to say it. He knew there was no chance at a normal life for him.

What was the point? He was a disgusting abomination that existed merely to feel pain, and there was nothing right about him. His brother, his siblings, they all deserved better. That thought made a
lump rise in his throat, and he wondered distantly if he would choke on it.

They always had fun, so why did he have to leave? Sure, life sucked. There was no denying that fact, but they were in it together. Why didn’t Klaus take him with him?

Klaus had soft lips. Ben should never have kissed them. The look on Klaus' face screamed it all. He was a vile thing, never should have been born. He wanted to kiss him again, but instead, he tried not to choke on the tears that wrapped their fingers around his throat. His brother reached for him with a trembling hand, twirling a shaking finger around a strand of his hair. No words were said.

He didn't want to live. Didn't want to breathe. Every inhale was met with an ache so deeply embedded inside his being that he knew it was a part of him, a part of existing, and he would rather greet the nothingness.

He did. He bit the bullet. He walked through an empty house, a silent home, and he found what he wanted. There was no one around to stop him or tell him that he was loved. That he'd be missed if he did it, if he went through with it.

Of course, because they were busy on another mission. He'd been unable to go this time around, too hysterical to function, and his father had given him this disapproving look that screamed, 'emotions aren't for the likes of you'.

You don't get that privilege. You aren't a child. You are a monster.

"Ben, what do you want to be when you grow up?" Klaus always had a bad habit of asking the questions he had trouble answering. He stammered before falling quiet because truth be told, he had no idea. He didn't think he'd live long enough to find out.

Klaus always had a bad habit of cracking his resolve. He followed after him hopelessly, heading toward the edge of the world with him. There was nothing in the abyss, only endless darkness. They chased the high together, but now the high wasn't enough. He'd chase after him, after Death. He'd jump into the abyss, let it carry him.
The pills tasted disgusting when he'd first taken them with his brother, coated in shit that made his gag reflex attempt to give way. He swallowed them down anyway.

He swallowed them down anyway.
"Why did you forgive me?"

The words said spoke volumes, too loud to ignore, and they made the room seem so much smaller somehow. Ben cringed inwardly as they danced around his head, leaving his brain spinning in circles like a Ballerina. They whispered temptations in his ear, things like remember, things like think.

The past was an unhappy time, and he'd prefer it far away from him, locked inside a box he hid alongside his body when they buried it. He didn't want to dig it up, now or ever, and the sheer weight of the question would've had him gasping for air had he needed it.

Ben wanted to lie, wanted to tell Klaus that he'd never been angry at him, but he knew his brother would see through him. He was almost positive it would hurt more if he knew he was lying but accepted it anyway, so he was too afraid to lie because he knew Klaus took whatever he could get. As long as Ben was still talking, any answer was good enough.

His fucking smile, while he thought about leaving.

"You're my brother," Ben replied softly. It wasn't an explanation. It was the lack thereof.

"That's not a good reason."

Why did you leave?
"What was it like...when you left?" He said it, but he didn't want to know. He asked, but he was afraid of the answer. Of course, what was he thinking? Of course, Klaus would have liked it better than being with him. He didn't want to think about these things.

"...It was okay. It was lonely, but...I tried. I never really got on my feet," Klaus mumbled, looking away from his brother.

Ben didn't know how to respond to the answer he'd received because it hadn't been what he'd expected, not even in the slightest. He'd never stopped to consider that Klaus was struggling too. Wherever he had gone, whatever he had been doing, it wasn't a fairytale. In the back of his mind, yes, he knew his brother was as disastrous as he was. It was one of the many reasons they got along so well. It was a mutual hatred for themselves and their powers. It was what fueled them.

But, Ben wanted things to be different for Klaus. He wanted his brother to have better, to be better. He wanted to give Klaus that fairytale ending, even if it hurt to be away from him. He knew he was dragging him down. He was a weighted ball tied to his ankle as he sank below the waves. He knew that.

Why didn't Klaus understand?

Why did Ben have to complicate things so horribly by ending his own life? Now, he'd linger around Klaus and watch him take the same path he took. He wondered if the ending would be the same. He wondered if it was inevitable.

He wanted to save him, but he couldn't save himself. He was ruining both of them, again. Klaus should have stayed gone. He should have stayed gone.

"Hey, hey, what are you thinking? I don't like the face you're making," Klaus spoke suddenly, shocking Ben out of his reverie. Their eyes met, and for a moment, he forgot what he was thinking about. Then, he saw the laugh lines. He saw how tired he look, exhaustion burrowed deep inside his soul, fatigue a synonym for his name.

"You, just...you. When we were growing up..."

"Oh? Why would you want to go back there of all places...? There are much better memories."
"Those ones have you in them. What else am I supposed to think about? Being alone without you? Overdosing? You overdosing?" It was harsher than he'd intended, and Klaus' eyes widened at his choice of words. For a moment, an awkward silence hung over them. Ben cleared his throat, rubbing the back of his neck. His eyes stayed glued onto anything that wasn't his brother, wasn't that hurt expression he was subconsciously making in reply to his outburst.

"...I'm sorry. I didn't..."

"No, you're right...you're right. I'm a fuckup."

"Klaus-"

"But I'm your fuckup, right? We're all a little...messed up, but we're trying. I know...it's my fault. You were hurting. I left to hurt alone, and I didn't help you. I really didn't. I was...I was afraid that I was screwing you up more. Look at you. Look what happened to you. It's because of me. If I hadn't left, if I hadn't...abandoned you, you wouldn't be here."

"If I didn't do it to myself, we both know it would've happened some way or another..."

"Yes, but not yet! Not now! You'd still be here-"

Ben opened his mouth to interject.

"Really here. Able to touch me. Able to...be touched. Hugged. I really want to hug you."

"...I'm sorry..."

"It's not your fault. You were hurting. Sometimes when you're hurting, it seems like the best option. I've been there. I...don't blame you for it. I should have noticed. I didn't. I was selfish...I was focused on my own pain, on the highs, and...I didn't notice. I didn't know," Klaus whispered softly, staring down at his hands. The skin was soft, but scarred in places where scabs had been picked open one too many times.
Ben reached for them instinctively.

There was the ghost caress of his fingertips brushing against knuckles before the only thing that remained was cold.
You Only Speak in Whispers

Chapter Summary

The pain was too much sometimes. It was ironic how human instinct was to retreat, to isolate, rather than to work together.

Chapter Notes

I'll be honest. I'm writing this while sitting in the theater waiting for an hour for Avengers Endgame.

Ben never talked about how he truly felt. In truth, he didn’t think it would fix anything. There was no solution. They were all supposed to bite the bullet and deal with the abuse. It was what they were destined for. They were the Umbrella Academy, a group of prepubescent superheroes charged with saving the world. They were the Hargreeves', a train hurtling toward a broken bridge.

Klaus always talked about what he thought, how he felt, and Ben envied him. He pitied him too because Klaus knew that ranting wouldn't solve his problem, but it was the only relief he had.

What were they supposed to do? Did they deserve their sad endings, or would there be something happier around the corner?

It didn’t seem like there would be. They were undeserving of that much, and Ben figured they might as well make the best out of what they had. Granted, it wouldn’t be much. He just hoped there was something they could salvage. That was also looking less likely.

Five mysteriously vanished, leaving everything behind, and no one was entirely sure what happened to him. They all remembered the last time that they saw him though, even if none of them would talk about it. Sure, they had their theories, but no one was sure. They lost their brother that day, so why would they want to acknowledge it? The denial made it hurt less, or Ben supposed that was what it was supposed to do.

Klaus left too, sometime after. The date blurred together. He left around the same time Vanya did. Couldn't handle it, didn't want to. It made no difference. They were gone.
Ben wondered if they ever thought about visiting, or if they didn't look back.

Could he really blame them if they didn't?

They did it. They left. They were free. The others lingered behind for various reasons. Luther was too loyal, didn't want to hurt their dad, and he didn't think about himself. Allison only stayed because he did. Diego would miss mom too much, and he knew that dad didn't treat her right. He wanted to protect her.

Ben, well, Ben only stayed because he was too afraid to leave. No one really understood that.

But, who would love someone like him? How could they? Monsters lived underneath his skin, moving and squirming. He would be afraid too. He was. Absolutely terrified.

Of himself.

Of hurting someone that didn't need to be hurt.

Lately, the first person that came to mind was his brother. It was frightening to see his face on his eyelids every time he closed his eyes, to feel the way they moved in response to it. Like they wanted to make him pay, or maybe it was just Ben. Maybe, he was the one that wanted Klaus to hurt, and that thought made him sick. Was he jealous that Klaus got away? Or, was it something more? It was painful to think his brother didn't want to be with him. Like he wasn't enough of a reason to stay.

Allison stayed, and everyone knew she was miserable.

And then, Ben realized something. He didn't want to see Klaus. Not like that, not desperate for some sort of happiness that he felt only drugs could provide. Maybe he'd get better, now that he was gone. Ben should be happy for him.

So, why did it hurt so badly when he thought of his brother? He missed him.

Couldn't he have at least stayed in touch?
"I thought I hated you," Ben began after an awkward pause. Klaus was silent, staring down at the soft skin of his hands. If he were being honest, he would say that he felt like complete shit, but he was almost positive that the way he was feeling was only a symptom of trying to get clean. He still thought about them, about the drugs, quite often actually, but the fear of not waking up to see Ben left him feeling worse than the withdrawals did.

"You should," he muttered in reply, glancing up at him with a dismissive shrug of his shoulders. It earned him a scoff.

"I should?"

"I think it'd be less painful that way."

"Oh, I think feeling bitter is just as bad. I was going to say that I didn't, you know. I thought I did, when you left, but it was only because I missed you."

"Whaaaat? There are better things to miss. Your standards must be really low..."

"Even if that were so, I can't exactly get rid of you," Ben offered, and Klaus eyed him curiously. He was surprised to see a smile spread across his brother's lips.

"That must be disappointing."

"No, not at all. I just...wish I could touch you."

"But you have."

"Less sporadically. I want to touch you...whenever I want. Like when we were kids. I hate having to hope for it, only to be let down. I'm not the greatest moral support, I'll be honest. There were probably better choices out there."
"If you say Diego, I'll hope that my punch hits you," Klaus griped. Ben's laugh was like smooth caramel. it washed over him, warmed his bones, and he wanted to drown in it. Then, it was silent. The awkward pause was back, and he wanted to soothe it away. He just didn't know how.

"...I remember when you two got along," Ben reminisced, "I remember when we all did."
I Feel Like I'm Drowning

Chapter Summary

Maybe it was the tone of his voice. Maybe it was the way his eyebrows dipped down ever so slightly. Whatever it was, it made Klaus' heart shatter into a million little pieces.

Chapter Notes

Ironic that my whole goal was to add a chapter for a bunch of stories that I may or may not update frequently, and my response to that was to disappear off the face of the Earth. I've been depressed for really dumb reasons that could've been avoided, but SELF SABOTAGE.

Anyway, let's hope I can stop being a little bitch.

Klaus wasn't sure whether it was the tone of Ben's voice or the way his eyebrows dipped downward ever so slightly, but the words said left him feeling dangerously hollow. Not that it was a new feeling, but it was a new kind of emptiness, the painful kind. Honestly, he thought that maybe he could do without it. It wasn't unlike him to do things to feel the way it hurt him, to see the disappointment on everyone's face because Klaus, you could do better. You can be better. Yeah, the hurt was something he ran after. Why? Self-sabotage seemed to be a thing that ran through the minds of human beings on a daily basis. Most of them, however, had enough self-control that they didn't act on those urges. Klaus? No. Fuck no. He didn't have a single ounce of self-control in his whole body. Maybe that's why he inhaled things that could kill him and injected shit that was hard enough to make him mistake glow in the dark stars for the real thing.

Ben was staring at him, but he was afraid to open his mouth. If he did, he was sure water would rush into his lungs and suffocate him. That's the kind of thing that happened when you were drowning, Klaus should know. He'd been drowning for a while, but he was getting tired now. He wasn't sure if he'd be able to hold himself up much longer. Instead, he forced a smile. God, the way his brother stared at him made him feel like the calm water had become storm-torn, and his body was being ravaged by waves that beat against his bones with the intent to harm. He wanted to cry, but he always did.

If he cried now, Ben would too. Where would they be then? Back, years back, trapped in a childhood that dictated their chaotic futures. It was funny, honestly, because thinking about it, none of them stood a chance. They never stood a chance. Their lives were the textbook definitions of tragic, pathetic, and messy. Throw in some other words like pitiful, and you'd come up with someone like Klaus.
And, even if Diego wanted to pretend he was high and mighty, even if Allison wanted to pretend she'd never debated putting a bullet in between her eyes, Klaus knew that it was probably an act because the trauma was still there. They had their own special doses of self-destruction. He kind of understood that now. He understood a lot, it seemed, when there wasn't a needle sticking out of his arm.

What it was, the fear, the way they saw how they were losing him but were powerless to stop it, and how they weren't strong enough to fix themselves. It wasn't their strength that kept them from Harm's way. It was fear, being too afraid to go through with anything too serious as they were confronted by their childhood every single day. Their little ticks, their little actions, all crafted from a toxic environment and a lack of love. None of them even realized it, except Ben. Only Ben, 'cause he was finally brave enough to do something about it.

God, and Klaus was a bitch. He shouldn't have tried to help him in his own little Klaus way, because things would be so much better right now if he just didn't exist. Here was the part where he'd stab himself with something that'd rob him of his coherency or inhale something that made his insides tingle and burn, but he was trying to quit. He was trying to be better. His childhood knew that, and it lurked around every corner, waiting to scare him with a perfectly time scream.

Ben, though. Ben touched his arm so briefly it shocked the shadows from the crevices of his brain. He wanted Ben to touch him, and it was that small touch that only lasted a second that broke the dam. Tears rolled down his cheeks. Klaus was an ugly crier, of course, because he was ugly when it came to almost everything. His brother looked startled, trying to move his hand away from him. Klaus tried to grab him, but they drifted apart.

How could someone make him feel so important and so fucking worthless simultaneously?

A shattered sob escaped him, and as if he hadn't tried before, he tried again. He tried to touch his brother's skin, to feel something other than the cold air that encased him, but he found his fingers met nothing. There was nothing to touch, not anymore, because of him.

"Klaus, it won't work."

"I...I don't..."

"Just stop...please. Look at what you're doing to yourself. You're tearing yourself apart. And if I know you, you're blaming yourself again. Don't do that. You didn't do anything. You didn't."
"You say that dear Ben, you say that...but I feel so...useless."

And it was then that Klaus watched his brother break in a new kind of way. One, he thought, that might have resembled his state right before he swallowed those pills, right before he did something he could never take back.

Klaus should have been there, but then again, maybe Klaus would've joined him.
Chapter Summary

Baby, when I'm yelling at you, it's not your fault. It's not your fault.

Chapter Notes

For people requesting Diego/Klaus, sure. I'll bite. You can have it...since you asked so nicely
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHJZayjj-Ps

Diego Hargreeves wasn't great at everything, sure because most people aren't, but he prided himself on his attentiveness. He noticed a lot of things, from the way people spoke to the way their body language betrayed when they were lying. It was the kind of thing adults thought they could get away with because they figured children weren't wise enough to catch on. He caught on, every single time. He'd grown tired of the strained smiles the media gave him because they were afraid of him, and they were too afraid to admit it. At this rate, he wouldn't even be angry if they told him the truth. The honesty would be a nice change of pace. It beat the lying and the constant fear they thought they were hiding so well. He didn't blame them for being scared. Looking at his siblings, he understood they were a freakshow attraction. People only cared because they were afraid.

Diego prided himself on his attentiveness, his ability to notice things that most people considered small and unimportant. He'd noticed the way Klaus was staring at that blonde boy like he wanted to melt into him. It was a strange thing at first, and Diego wasn't entirely sure what to do with the knowledge. He'd pondered it for a bit, trying to come to some rational conclusion, because fuck, that was how he looked at cute girls. It dawned on him that Klaus might not be like him. Actually, no, that was an easy answer. Klaus wasn't like him, not even in the slightest. He was lanky, tall, and blowing on him could break him. No, Klaus was into boys. To say he was agitated about the whole thing was an understatement. Why? It wasn't because he disapproved. It was because he should've seen it from the start. Klaus should've told him. It shouldn't have been an issue.

He also noticed how Ben and Klaus always disappeared together, always together, and what the fuck? Was he not allowed to join their stupid cool boy clique? Or maybe, maybe it was something else entirely. Like Luther and Allison. Now all that was left was Diego and Vanya, left by themselves because no one wanted to hang out with them. It was annoying, like an itch under his skin that he couldn't scratch. He hated it, honestly, and he wanted to punch them both right in their fucking faces. Except, maybe not. He wasn't quite sure yet. Why did it bother him? Why did being shoved into Vanya's little corner bother him?
He was lonely, but he would never admit that. Never. He'd rather die. Still, he missed the times when Klaus followed him like a helpless little thing, begging Number One and Two to let him play. Before One ran off and got a new playmate, Allison. Because she was cute, and he could giggle over her. Diego noticed that too. He wasn't daft. He knew they drew each other in like a moth to a flame. But Klaus? Who gave Klaus permission to think he was better than Diego?

He wanted Klaus to beg for permission to be included. He wanted Klaus to chase after him like a dog. Yeah, that was definitely something he thought about. The fact that Klaus had just given up was infuriating. What's worse was, it was boring. He wanted to feel important, wanted to do something, and he had nothing. Just like Vanya had nothing. It gave him a new understanding.

~ * ~ * ~ * ~

"What the fuck are you whining about now?" Diego arched an eyebrow at Klaus, and he watched the man fiddling with the little clothing he had on. It made him roll his eyes, but he didn't comment on it. His junkie brother would have to figure his own shit out. Did that make him an awful person? He'd tried to help him, but some people just couldn't be helped. They didn't want to be rescued from the things that were destroying them. They wanted to drown. That thought left a sour taste in his mouth. Maybe he needed to be more honest with himself. Bitterness didn't suit him, but damn. He'd failed a lot in his lifetime. He'd failed to see that Ben was crashing until it was too late. He'd failed to stop Klaus time and time again. He'd failed to fix damaged relationships, one after another. He was a failure, but he'd pretend he wasn't until he failed again. Then, maybe he'd come to terms with it. Until then, he'd judge Klaus as if he had any right to.

He hadn't seen Klaus leave him room for days. In fact, he kind of forgot that Klaus was even around. He'd figured that he'd taken the lack of a spotlight as an opportunity to slip out, but then again, he did love when everyone's eyes were glued to him. The fact that he was standing here now said a lot, but Diego wouldn't say anything about that. He assumed his brother was getting antsy, not being the center of attention for once.

"...was I whining? I normally only do that when I'm having a good time, Diego, buddy. I didn't even know you were here. What are you doing here?" Klaus was asking, but Diego wasn't paying him much mind. He was somewhere else, thinking about something else. When his brother didn't leave, his eyes focused on his figure.

"I could ask you the same thing. Don't you have an alley somewhere to be passing out in? That's what you do right?" Diego questioned, and the words were a lot harsher than he'd intended. He didn't mean to say them, but it was too late. Here they were, and now the ball was on Klaus' side of the court. He'd have to wait and see what he did with it. Part of him hoped that maybe he'd pick up the damn thing and throw it, for fuck's sake.
"I'm clean," the other male whined pathetically, and the sound made Diego flinch inwardly. He didn't believe it, not for a second. He didn't think Klaus had it in him to be better because none of them did. They would all point fingers at one another, but in truth, they were all a little fucked in different ways. Picking on Klaus made it feel like maybe he wasn't breaking. It wasn't that he didn't hope what his brother said was true, that he was clean now. It was that he didn't want to get his hopes up because they'd been here before, and every single time he was an emergency contact called after Klaus OD'ed. That seemed to be the only time Klaus remembered his name if he was being honest. For years, he'd gotten tired of the repetitive bullshit and left Klaus in the dark. If his brother died, he'd be better off not knowing.

"You sure about that? I don't believe it. Little Klaus, sniffing up whatever you could get your hands on since...what...thirteen? Clean? Bullshit. That's fucking gold right there. Come on. Not that long ago you were digging through our father's shit trying to find something you could pawn off for dope. Fucking GOLD."

"Hey, okay, to be fair...I was in a really bad place. Come on, I have bad days."

"Bad days? How could you have possibly been in a bad place? What did you go through? Don't say you were sad about our father's death. You didn't give a shit about that, and I know that's the truth. Pitch something else. What got you down in the dumps? What made the little storm cloud pour rain over you?"

"...well, you see...life is just a bitch sometimes. Diego, you of all people should know that. It hasn't been particularly," Klaus trailed off, eyeing his brother with a small smile, "kind to you either. You have definitely seen better days."

And, as if on cue, Diego jumped up and lunged across the table for his brother's throat. The damned look of smugness on the other's face said it all, and he wanted to wipe it across the floor. Klaus squealed and dodged his advances playfully, his body twirling around and an infectious laugh leaving his lips. Diego growled dangerously. "Say that again, you druggie fuck."

"So violent. So mean. I'm clean, really, I am. You can test me if you really want to." Klaus was poking a sleeping bear with a sharp stick. It was the only way he could think to take his mind off of things he didn't want to think about. Sure, he could've just talked to Allison about the whole ordeal, spilled his heart to her to receive constructive criticism and advice that would actually provide a solution. That was probably healthier egging Diego on just for the sake of a fight. The pain would be something new, and he wanted that. It was a good distraction. Deep down, Diego was aware of the fact that maybe there was something underneath the surface that neither of them were taking the time to acknowledge.

Ben was rolling his eyes, and his attempt at arguing against Klaus' stupid idea was met with feigned
ignorance. "This is stupid."

"Why is that, Benny?"

"He's going to kill you, and I swear to God, as funny and entertaining as it would be..."

"He would NEVER."

"Never what, you shit? Why do you keep doing that?" Diego shouted, grabbing for Klaus again. The leaner man barely ducked out of the way, sticking his tongue out as jabbed a finger into his brother's gut.

"You got a little gut there, big brother. I think you're getting a little soft. Not that I'm fat-shaming or anything because I like to fancy myself as a more body positive individual. I think it's a good look for you."

Fury sparked in Diego's eyes, blazing dangerously as he snatched Klaus' coat and tugged him back. He slammed him up against the wall, crowding him against it and blocking his escape route. "What was that? Are you calling me fat?"

"What? No! Good Heavens no! Why ever would I do that? You're not fat! That's such a rude thing to say! What did I just say about being body positive, huh? You should learn to love yourself however you are. Even if you're soft and pudgy, there's nothing wrong with that. You look great. Really, honestly. You look fantastic even with the extra-"

Diego shut him up by shoving him up against the wall harder, and Klaus gasped audibly before swallowing uncomfortably. The thinner male tilted his head upward, his eyes meeting Diego's. Ben stood next to them, an eyebrow arched as he watched what was happening with a look of surprised confusion. Klaus glanced toward him. "Don't tell me you like this. Are you getting off on this, Klaus?"

"Okay, that's not my fault, but don't tell him that," Klaus muttered, flashing all of his teeth in a smile. Diego followed his gaze, saw nothing, and held Klaus tighter. He felt inexplicably angry. Even now, his brother wasn't even acknowledging him, and the urge to hit him in the face was becoming harder to ignore.
"Tell me what, you shitstain?"

"Nothing, just...you're awfully close, and...and you should know me, dear brother. My body may...react to your treatment..."

A disgusted noise was Diego's reply, and he shoved Klaus up against the wall violently before stepping back. "What the fuck is wrong with you? Seriously? That's...what the fuck?" He would be lying if he said he wasn't dumbfounded by Klaus' previously statement, and he wasn't sure how he was supposed to follow it up. Any threat he might have had died on his tongue.

"Oh my God, you totally did that on purpose. You pervert."

"Of course I didn't! I thought you'd have more faith in me, Ben! Diego, oh God, your face. You look like you're about to burst a blood vessel! Oh dear, you need to relax. You're going to give yourself gray hair! And, as much as it would suit you, you really shouldn't..."

"Shut the fuck up. I don't want to hear about your weird fucked up fetishes."
Why Him?

Chapter Summary

The wood of the door's frame was rough against his fingers.

Chapter Notes

*casually attempts to tie things together unsuccessfully*

"I think I like boys." The words were sudden, coming from behind a partially closed door. They stopped Diego in his tracks, and he hesitated as his mind argued with his morals. The pause was brief, and his mind won the debate. He'd heard the words loud and clear, but they weren't as surprising as they should've been. He'd suspected that Klaus wasn't interested in girls for quite a while now, and hearing his brother's statement only confirmed his suspicions.

"Want to...talk about it?"

"What am I supposed to say, Ben?"

"Why do you like them?"

Quietly, Diego approached the doorway, leaving up against the wall to peek through the crack. The wood of the frame was rough against his fingers, kept him grounded, and he caught a glimpse of his brothers. Klaus was sitting next to Ben on his bed, and his eyes were puffy as if he'd been crying. Diego caught his bottom lip between his teeth, digging into the skin and tugging until it hurt. He tasted copper, releasing his lip and running his tongue along the length it. The burn was sweet. He pressed down a bit.

"It's not bad if you do, you know. You can like whoever you want, but...you have to like them for the right reasons..."

Dammit, it should have been him. He should've talked to Klaus about it as soon as he suspected it. He'd never thought about the fact that his brother might be stressed about it. It was such a small, insignificant thing, but it made sense. Knowing who their father was, Diego had to scold himself for
not realizing it sooner. Of course, Klaus would be worried about something like this when their father made anything that wasn't training seem like a crime against God.

"I think they look nice...okay? It's really sudden, and I'm not sure what to think about it. I've never kissed anyone, so maybe I'm just mistaken. How could I know what I like if I've never...done anything like that before?"

"You can have an inkling, I guess. Boys catch your attention more than girls do...right?"

"Girls are too soft...I think. They're not..."

Diego leaned closer, trying to find a better angle without exposing himself. He doubted they could see him where he was, the door obscuring most of their vision. It didn't exactly help his case much either, but it provided cover. He'd make do with what he had. God, this was pathetic, but he was already too invested to back out. If anyone came up the stairs, he'd be fully visible. There would definitely be questions, but it was a risk he was willing to take. He'd come up with some excuse when it was needed. He was good at that.

"That makes sense...so, you like the way boys look compared to girls. That's okay, Klaus."

"Yeah, but...what about with you? What catches your eye more...?"

"Not what...who. I have someone I like, but...it's stupid. I don't...I'm not really thinking about the...gender thing."

Of course, Diego should've respected their privacy. They weren't speaking to him. It wasn't about him, and it most certainly wasn't meant for him either, but he was curious. Curiosity was a dangerous thing, and it was burning in his chest cavity. He wanted to scratch the itch it created inside him.

"Benny, you like someone! That's so cool. Don't tell dad! I bet he'd give you some speech about how crushes slow you down. Do I know them?"

Yes, Benny, you like someone. But who is it? Who does Klaus like? Is there anyone? Honestly, he was acting like a child. He wanted to know. It took all of his strength not to scream it out, to tell them to hurry up, and he absentmindedly bit at his lip again. The feelings coursing through his veins
reminded him of the frustration he felt when he couldn't form a word that sat mockingly on his tongue, refusing to come out. His heart was stuttering.

"Don't...worry about that. Hey, Klaus, if you could kiss a boy to...I don't know, experiment, would you?"

Diego rolled his eyes. The answer was obvious. He'd kiss someone if he had someone, just for the sake of saying he did. Come on, Ben. It was Klaus they were talking about. Their socially awkward brother still tried his hardest to flirt, even if he wasn't the best at it. He nearly snickered at that.

"Probably. If I had a boy to kiss."

Yeah, he figured.

"...Klaus, what do you think about Luther and Allison?"

At that, Diego pulled his head back a bit and scrunched up his nose. Everyone knew about Luther and Allison. They weren't very subtle, sneaking around together. He knew what they were doing behind closed doors when they thought no one was listening in. He peeked back through the crack in the door.

"Why are you asking me that?"

"I want to know."

"...it's weird, but it's not...too bad. We're not blood-related, so I guess it shouldn't be that weird, you know? I don't think it's really weird. It's kinda strange 'cause I always saw them as my siblings, but...what's so weird about it 'cause we're really just...a bunch of people living underneath a roof together. We're not connected by blood, so liking each other shouldn't be...frowned at. We didn't ask to be brought together. I mean, come on. Ben, why did you want to know that?"

"Don't hate me."

Diego watched as Ben leaned forward, his eyes widening as he watched his lips press against
Klaus'. His heart skipped a beat inside his chest, and he dug his fingers into the wood of the frame until there was some semblance of pain there. He pressed his own lips together in a firm line, tearing his eyes away from the scene unfolding before him. A trace of bitterness took root and began to grow.
You Don't See Me

Chapter Summary

You can see, clearly, but you don't see me.

Chapter Notes

If you don't like this OT3, I may write an alternate story that doesn't have Diego involved much.
A little break from the seriousness at the beginning

TheFashionista: Honestly, you two. The constant bickering is really something. Can't you be the bigger man, Diego?

knife_fetish: who the fuck changed my name?


[knife_fetish has changed his nickname to kraken]

DoctorWho: How charming. Is it supposed to be funny?

spaceape: KLAUS.

itsbritneybitch: it wasnt me y r u assuming things 😐

itsbritneybitch: dont u kno assuming makes an ass out of u and me 😖😆😆

itsbritneybitch: this level of evil genius i would nver but the names r sooooo much better than wat u had b4 ill b honest

VanyaViolin: What did I come back to? I'm really confused.

itsbritneybitch: some1 changed nicknames an stuff but rly theyre freaking out way too much i think knife fetish fits great

Kraken: im fucking scrolling up and then im going to strangle you

itsbritneybitch: wait no

~ * ~ * ~ * ~ * ~ * ~ * ~
Klaus was lounging across his bed on his stomach, kicking his feet absentmindedly as he typed on his phone with no clear thought in mind. A smile spread across his lips, and Ben glanced over his shoulder to read the screen. "Did you change my name too?"

The question was too real too fast, and Klaus paused his ministrations to look at him. An uncomfortable silence began to grow between them, and he tried to figure out how to answer his brother. On one hand, he figured that Ben would want to be included in the constant bickering, but it was possible that maybe changing his username was disrespectful. Klaus didn't want to exclude him, oh God no, but at the same time, he didn't want to come across as being insensitive. He did that a lot. It was what he was good at. Ben seemed to notice his inner struggle because he smiled softly and change the topic.

"Diego's name was funny," he stated, but the weight on Klaus' shoulders remained. Perhaps it would be best if he asked what Ben wanted, but the question was lodged firmly in his throat, and he couldn't convince it to come out. "Knife fetish."

"I figured it fit..."

Then, the silence was back full force. They stared at each other without really seeing until even that was too much, and their eyes fell onto anything else. It kept them sane, kept them from having to deal with the problem. Klaus found himself peeking at his brother as if he was able to will the other's discomfort away. It didn't work, obviously, but you can't fault him for trying. He sighed, running a hand through sweaty black locks and tugging gently just to feel something that wasn't the painful pounding of his heart against his ribs.

"...you're too careful with me."

"Too careful? Is that what you said? It's not being careful, I just..."

"What is it, Klaus? You never used to have a censor before...but now it's like, I don't know, you don't really know how to treat me because you're worried I'll break."

"...I don't think you'll break. Ben-"

Klaus was interrupted by the sound of his door opening, and when he glanced over he saw Diego standing in the doorway with his arms crossed across his chest. From where he was, he was able to see the clear cut definition of the other's muscles, and it reminded him of his earlier joking. Ben
quietly faded into the background thinking that his brother didn't notice, but he did, but he wasn't entirely sure how to include him. He wished for nothing more than to be able to grab him by the hand and pull him over, but he knew that wasn't possible. Not anymore.

"So, you didn't change the names?" Diego smiled and followed Klaus' eyes to an empty place in the room. He figured it had to do with Ben again, as it often did.

"I didn't. You have no proof."

"I scrolled up, you fuck. No sense in denying it now. It says you changed it as clear as day." The conversation derailed. "What's up with Ben now?"

It was that question that startled Klaus out of his thoughts. When his eyes met Diego's, he saw the other man jerk his head in the direction he'd been staring at just prior. He braced himself for a possible joke or for the chance that he'd have to defend his deceased brother's honor. When nothing came, he shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know how to include him," he replied softly, the words leaving his lips easier than he thought. Diego hummed quietly, but he didn't reply.

"Tell him I'm fine," Ben muttered, but Klaus only eyed him. He didn't say anything.

"Can't say this is something I've had to deal with, not seeing the dead and all."

"You used to think I couldn't do that..."

"You haven't done it in a while. Not since we were kids."

"I haven't been sober for a while."

"Not since we were kids," Diego added again, slowly.

"Yeah..."
Diego opened his mouth, his face betraying that he wanted to say something, but the silence didn't diminish. Eventually, he must've forgotten what he was trying to say because he shrugged his shoulders in lieu of an answer. It was awkward again, but that wasn't new. What was new was the fact that his brother was lingering, eyes falling onto where Ben was standing, and he seemed unsure of himself for once. He gave up. It didn't take long, but he gave up. Klaus watched as the door closed after his retreating back, and an inexplicable feeling of loss remained in his place.

He found that he wanted to know what he was trying to say.

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