Undergrads
by Fanfic_or_bust

Summary

It's freshman move-in day at the University dorms and David is not impressed by the idea of sharing a room... but what choice does he have? He blew a massive fortune during his post-grad trip to Europe, so instead of attending NYU in a swank Manhattan apartment, he is attending a small liberal arts college in Ontario and sharing a room with a complete stranger. But things could be worse, he almost had to live at home. He just hopes his roommate isn't a total troglodyte.

Patrick has saved up since he was old enough for his first paper route, and the day has finally come! The day he can escape the shackles of his small town life and reinvent himself. He can't wait to meet his new roommate, and to start this great adventure he has looked forward to for so long!

Ps. The rating will change to explicit... but not yet.

Notes

I have so many plans for this fic! Expect many more chapters, but I do have a plan involved and an endgame already in mind.

Shout out to stargatewars for being my constant cheerleader and supportive beta!

Fyi There is a second chapter coming today from Patrick's perspective! Stay tuned!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Move-in Day Part 1: David

As David watched the landscapes pass by his car window, and urban highway turned to farm fields and wooded areas, the reality of the situation started to hit home in a way it hadn't before. The day had come at last, both dreaded and hotly anticipated, almost in equal measures. The life changing event that had been looming ever closer for months was finally at hand. His gap year was over, his extravagant (and overly expensive) trip to Europe was in the past, and it was time to get back to real life. It was freshman move-in day at the University dorm, and he was all packed up and driving towards this new and admittedly exciting chapter of his life. This was it. He could do this, he told himself.

This was, admittedly, not the way he would have planned his arrival for his first day. His parents were a lot, and he would have preferred them to be left out of any first impressions he was going to make as he moved his things inside. But alas, it was not to be. David had resolved himself to it by now, mostly because arguing any further would just worsen his punishment. And things were already bad enough.

David had, to put it delicately, overspent on his trip abroad. He didn’t really know how it happened, but he had discovered that his Black Card did, in fact, have a limit. And he had found it one day when he was settling his tab after a night of bottle service in a VIP lounge in Amsterdam. Johnny Rose had not been happy to receive the phone call David had been forced to make, needing to be bailed out with more money, despite having already put tens of thousands in debt onto his father’s credit card.

He really did sort of deserve this.

When his Father had become fully aware of the severity of the situation, he’d ended the Europe trip immediately. It had been seriously humiliating, and incidentally caused a really hot guy David had been casually dating to dump him immediately as well. He’d flown back home that same day, still half drunk off of absinthe, to await judgement and sentencing. He wasn’t going to get out of this that easy.

The Roses were wealthy, but not limitlessly so. His father ran a large and previously quite successful video rental company, though the world was changing and Rose Video was not bringing in the income it once did for the family. His mother still had a healthy stream of residuals coming in for some of the old made-for-tv movies she did back in the 80s and 90s, but even those were slowing down as the age of cable tv seemed to be drawing to a close as well. The Roses were not as rich as they once were, and David had spent far too much on his trip to Europe for Johnny to take sitting down.

He still didn’t know how it had happened, how he had gotten so carried away. But there were
beautiful people everywhere, and they seemed to only be interested in him when he was buying them things. And it was so easy to buy things with the handy black charge card his Dad had so generously provided him. He just must have lost track at some point along the way how much he was actually spending. In the end, he’d racked up almost a hundred thousand dollars in debt, of which he had no means to pay back to his father.

But despite having no means to pay Johnny back, his father had to find the money somehow. He said he simply didn’t have the capital to cover this particular screw-up, and David had never felt worse. It seemed like his Dad was already stressing about money, and now he’d gone and blown a small fortune on himself. And he didn’t even have anything to show for it, other than some hazy alcohol and drug-tinged memories, an ill-advised tattoo, and a lingering aversion to absinthe.

He’d been all set to go to NYU for his first year of University, but the cost of tuition along with room and board in Manhattan was exorbitant, so that was the first thing to go. David had mourned the loss of his New York coming-of-age adventure like it was a death in the family, but he couldn’t seem to talk his way out of it. His Father had laid down the cost savings of sending David to a small liberal arts university in Ontario, not too far from Toronto, over the expensive and (in his words) unnecessary NYU.

He reasoned that David was still an undergrad, and he didn’t even have a clear direction of where he was going in life, or what he wanted to do. He was registering as undeclared, as well, which didn’t help his case. Johnny’s exact words on the matter were: “If you’re serious about NYU, you can prove to me you’re serious about this for a few years, and then we can talk.”

And that had been that. David didn’t exactly know where the few years had come from. Just one year of tuition at this school, combined with living in this dorm, sharing a room, using a meal plan, was enough to compensate for the money he spent in Europe. But Johnny was still angry, and it wouldn’t do to make it worse. But David was sure if he just towed the line for a while, he’d be in New York next year. He was counting on it.

So as they pulled into the Lady Eaton (the name of his dorm) parking lot, David took a deep breath, and once again resolved himself to what was about to happen next: Attending registration, and then moving his things into his room. With his parents. Ugh. He deserved this, he reminded himself, but it didn’t really help the pre-embarrassment he was already feeling at the thought of what Johnny and Moira Rose might do and say in front of his fellow dorm-mates.

“Oh David,” (which she pronounced Day-ved) “Why, this building is made of con-crete! Is this some sort of prison school for troubled youths?” His mother asked with an air of scandalized horror as they stepped out of the car, looking around at the campus before her. David actually thought it was kind of pretty, in a quaint sort of way. “Oh John, surely we must not be so destitute that we have to send our only son to a correctional institute? ”
“Now, sweetheart, the boy brought this on himself. And it’s not a correctional institute.” Johnny corrected, and David vaguely listened as he looked around. There were students all around, and people in yellow t-shirts with clipboards, pointing people towards a building with large windows across the lush green courtyard. “It’s a very respectable and affordable liberal arts university that is perfectly suitable for our currently directionless son.” His dad added, pitching his voice to aim those last words at David.

“It’s okay, Mom. It really is. It’s kind of pretty, too, in a poor sort of way.” David said, trying to calm her down, if for nothing else, to keep her from embarrassing him any further. She looked doubtful.

“This campus was designed by a very famous architect, Moira. I read about it in one of those pamphlets the school sent, when we chose the place. The concrete is supposed to contrast the nature around it, and the buildings were all designed to fit into and compliment the landscape around them.” Johnny added, trying in his turn to win Moira’s favour of the place. It would make the day go so much easier if she was on board and not pointing out every little thing to complain about.

And looking around, David could see it. The way the buildings both contrasted and fit into the lush green space around them. His dorm seemed to be nestled into the base of a tree-covered crescent shaped hill, and there were large stones worked into the grey concrete of the walls. There were trees and flowers and green spaces all around him, and he could hear a constant melody of insects buzzing and birds singing, and the constant rustle of wind in the leaves of the trees that covered the hill behind the dorm.

It was… pretty. In a way that was very foreign and more than a little uncomfortable for David. But it was pretty. He had to admit that. He just wasn’t used to being so surrounded by green space. The thought of all the insects that must be around, and the potential for wild animals was actually a little alarming. But, okay, it was really very pretty. He didn’t hate it. It could be worse. His Dad could have insisted he go to UofT or Ryerson so he could live at home and save money. But David was desperate to move out and get out from under his parents’ caring but unpredictable and at times manic attentions. At least David had won the battle to move out when he compromised and they came to an agreement on Trent University.

David didn’t even care that he was going to have to share a room, or that the dorm didn’t have any kind of cleaning or laundry services, or that he’d be eating cafeteria food for the next year. He had been this close to spending his freshman year living in his childhood bedroom, under the thumb of the father he had just practically financially bankrupted, and a mother that at times made Emily Dickinson look sane. So whatever Lady Eaton College had in store for him was better than that.
He wouldn’t admit this to anyone, but he also sort of liked that Trent sorted their students into colleges, a lot like houses in Harry Potter. It was a stupid thing to be excited about, but here he was, hoping that Lady Eaton was the “Slytherin” of the Trent Colleges. He could have just as easily been sorted to Champlain or Otonabee or Gzowski, but he’d been assigned Lady Eaton when he’d been accepted at the school. That meant if he lived on campus, which he was doing, he would stay on their corner of the campus and live in their dorm. Though regardless of living in the dorms, he would always belong to the College, as long as he was enrolled at Trent.

Champlain was beside them, bordering the river, and across the picturesque bridge that spanned the Otonabee river there was the aptly named Otonabee College, and then Gzowski beyond that. He was sure they were all bustling with new students arriving as well, every inch of the campus buzzing with nervous and excited energy. David could feel it, and he bit back a nervous smile. This was it.

Registration had taken almost an hour. They’d entered the line of new students outside in the courtyard, and had slowly followed it inside, up a short staircase, and then around and down into what David assumed was the cafeteria or mess-hall. There were groupings of tables and chairs all over the room, and he could see a locked pull-down door that he assumed would reveal counters and the food preparation area.

Moira had complained the whole way, and wondered loudly “to herself” several times about the availability of a VIP express line (there wasn’t one). But they’d eventually gotten to the front of the line. David had checked in, been assigned his room, and was given a branded tote bag full of a whole bunch of other branded items as well. David could see a lanyard, a coffee mug, a t-shirt, a door-sized white marker board, and some various other items.

Finally with a key and a room assignment, it was time to start moving everything upstairs. His father helped a little bit, his mother hindered more than anything, but eventually they’d gotten all of David’s belongings up into his room. The space was a little larger than he’d expected, but smaller than he’d hoped. The walls were a creamy off-white, and there was what was a probably ancient grey pile-less carpet. He made a note that he would have to obtain a small vacuum at some point soon, as he noticed it once again. He had completely forgotten to pack one.

One wall of the room was dominated by a massive pine wall unit, with two closets, shelving, and drawers. There were two twin beds on opposite sides of the small room, arranged parallel to each other and separated by an empty space only a handful of feet wide. There was one big, long desk that stretched across the entire back wall that had their only window.

David had swallowed a little nervously the first time he’d seen the beds. A complete stranger
would be sleeping right there, and there wasn’t anything in the way of privacy. It felt so strangely intimate. But he reassured himself that this was just part of the dorm experience, and hoped against hope that his roommate wasn’t awful. He didn’t know what he’d do if he was stuck with some hygiene-challenged troglodyte.

Whoever they were, though, didn’t seem to have arrived yet. So David had chosen the bed to the right of the window after checking the compass app on his phone and determining which way was East. He wanted as little morning sunlight as possible, though he didn’t know what hope he had of getting to sleep in much, sharing such a small space with another person. After deciding on his side, it was time to start unpacking.

His parents had, unfortunately, insisted on staying and “helping”, though at this point they were getting in the way more than anything. It wasn’t a big room, and definitely not big enough for the Roses’ large personalities. His Dad just liked bossing people around, so he was enjoying calling out directions, mostly to things David was already in the process of doing. Like he wanted to take credit for the work somehow, or act like he was helping.

It drove David crazy, and he wanted to snap at the both of them to just hurry the fuck up and leave, and stop telling him to do things he was already doing. But he didn’t, because he was trying to be on his best behaviour in hopes that they’d leave some cash behind when they finally did leave. And he guessed he sort of also appreciated their attention, in an extremely pathetic sort of way.

“Yes, good, I think that’s a good spot for that.” Johnny said, as David placed a framed photograph of himself and Carly Rae Jepsen when she played at his sixteenth birthday party at the Docks. It didn’t really have all that much sentimental value to him, but he had to put some pictures out that weren’t just of himself, and frankly, David didn’t have all that many friends he cared to commemorate in a framed display. Frames were special. Frames meant something. And David just didn’t have that many frame-worthy friends these days.

It wasn’t that he lacked for company, but he did lack companionship. There were always people around, but no one ever seemed to really care about him, to ask about him, unless he was the one reaching out or offering to pay. The Toronto rich-kid prep-school scene had been vapid, materialistic, and vicious. As gross and lacking in amenities as this dorm was, David found he’d rather be here than back there, with them. Which was saying something. Because David did not want to be here right now. He was supposed to be in New York, not Peterborough.

When he’d gotten dragged back from Europe by his proverbial ear, not a single one of those bitches had called to see if he was okay, or to offer to start footing the bill now that his cash flow had dried up. Not a single fucking one. Train tickets, bottle service, private chefs, making out on the beach in Ibiza… none of it mattered to any of them. That’s why, despite having an amazing collection of photos from his trip, of him in beautiful places with beautiful people that would surely impress anyone who saw them, he wasn’t going to display them. Those assholes weren’t frame-
worthy. But Carly Rae? Sure. It was the best he had, and he wasn’t about to put up photos of his parents or sister like some fucking weirdo. If anything, people would see this picture and ask about it and it would be a conversation starter.

When he was done, David looked around and found that there wasn’t much left to do. He had made his bed, unpacked his clothes, set up and plugged in his laptop and paired it with his wireless speakers. He saw there was a built-in desk lamp, so he plugged in the one he'd brought from home and placed it on the shelf by his bed. He didn’t have much in the way of decorative items, but he’d placed a potted plant on his side of the desk, his Slytherin snow globe on his bedside table, and had a few knicknacks on his dresser. All that was really left was putting up his posters, but he wasn’t in a huge rush to do that.

“What’s next?” His Dad piped in, clapping his hands and rubbing them together like he actually planned to do something, despite there clearly being nothing left to do.

“Nothing but my posters, but I don’t need your help with that.” David replied, thinking he had actually survived and that maybe they would finally leave on their own. And they hadn't even done any irreparable damage done to his reputation, he didn’t think!

“No, no, I’m happy to help, son.” His Dad replied, and David furrowed his brow a little. It was almost like his Dad didn’t want to leave. Was it possible they were going to miss him? His Mother, sure, but Johnny too?

“Yes, David, I think it wise to cover as much of this insipid cream wall as soon as possible. Oh it’s so jejune, it’s like a prison cell! I can’t leave here before I know you will have some colour in your life.” His Mother added, and David rolled his eyes.

“Ok, well, I can put them up on my own. It’s not a three person job.” He objected, but he didn’t put up much of a fight. He knew it would be useless anyways.

“Tsk tsk David. Don’t eschew our help so quickly! As they say, three heads are better than one.” His mother replied.

“It’s two heads are better than one, and I’m fine.” He retorted.

“Don’t correct your mother, David.” His Father cut in, and David bit his lips to stop from arguing back further. He was supposed to be on his best behaviour, he reminded himself.
“Okay, sure.” He said in a falsely bright voice, but his facetiousness seemed to go right over his Mother’s head, because she smiled brightly in reply.

So there he found himself, twenty minutes later, holding a poster of vintage leather jacket-wearing sex-God, George Michael up against the wall, and having both of his parents shouting directions on the correct place to stick it.

“A little to the left.” His Father instructed, and David inched the poster over.

“Up! Up, David!” His Mother cried, and David took a deep, calming breath and moved it up by a half inch. “Not the whole thing, the right side.” She corrected, and David fought the urge to scream.

“Well you didn’t say that, did you?” He snapped back, and lowered the left side just a hair.

“There!” His mother said, and he pressed the blue gum-tack against the wall to stick it in place. He didn’t like the stuff, he would prefer to frame his posters, but they weren’t allowed to put holes in the drywall, which David found ridiculous. But the last thing he wanted to do was lose his damage deposit when he was already in trouble enough about money.

When he stepped back to look at the placement, it was clear his parents had no idea what the hell they were talking about. In the entire time they’d been doing this, they’d only managed to hang one other poster (a sexy one of Mariah with a rainbow across her boobs, a photo shoot she’d done for gay pride), and this one was nowhere near in line with it. “Are you both insane?” David asked, horrified, feeling incredibly OCD about the misalignment, the sight of it making his skin crawl.

“It looked different when you were holding it, you must have moved it.” His Dad argued back.

“Yes, this configuration is all wrong, take it off and move it down.” His mother added, and this time David didn’t repress his groan of frustration.

“The blue stuff is getting less sticky!” He complained, but reached up and carefully pulled it free of the wall.
“Ok down, down--no, too much. Up, up.” His Dad instructed, and David dutifully followed his instructions, carefully repeating the mantra of *they’ll be gone soon* in his head, and trying not to lose sight of his remaining hope that his Dad would be generous with his parting gift of cash.

“Tilt! Tilt!” His mother urged.

“Which way!?” He wailed back at her, utterly frustrated at her continued vaguity. He wasn’t even convinced it needed to be rotated at all, and that instead she just liked hearing the sound of her own voice. Instructions for instructions sake. Never one to be left out of the spotlight.

“The other way, of course.” She replied, and David felt a shudder go through his entire body as he controlled his frustrations.

“Which way is the other way !?” David replied, his voice rising and turning a little shrill even to his own ears. He twisted from where he stood on his bed facing the wall, to look down at his parents, intending to glare at them, give them his most withering death-stare. But he froze halfway, eyes going wide as they caught with those of a very cute guy that was leaning against the doorframe, watching with an amused smile playing at his lips. “Oh…” David said, lamely, feeling a tidal wave of embarrassment wash over him.

“Sorry to interrupt.” The stranger said, but he didn’t move to leave. Or look very sorry, either, for that matter.

“Ummm,” David said, having no idea how much he’d seen, or what to say. He was clearly struggling, freezing in an extremely awkward way, very aware of the presence of his parents. But the stranger, who was wearing a blue zip-up hoodie over some band t-shirt David couldn’t make out and some very straight-leg heavy denim jeans, just continued to stand there. Confident as can be. And he was *smirking*. Who was this guy?

“Hi, I’m Patrick.” He said, still holding David’s eye, before turning to look briefly at both of his parents. Then he looked back at David, and that little amused smile was back. If David wasn’t crazy, it was almost *teasing*. But this person was a complete stranger. What kind of overly self-confident psychopath would be teasing someone they’d never met before? But David still felt a small, shy smile want to pull at his own lips in response, so he bit down on them from inside, pursing them and narrowing his brows to control his features. “So I guess that’s my bed?” The stranger who was named Patrick added, pointing at the bed across the small space.
And David’s stomach suddenly felt like it was doing an acrobatic act and he felt a nervous flutter in his extremities. *This was his roommate.* This guy. This smirking, Old Navy sweatshirt-wearing, handsome, confident boy was going to be sharing a room with him. Sleeping feet away from him. They were going to be living together. David, and Patrick. Patrick… the hottest, but most obviously straight guy David had ever met on such short acquaintance. Even in the 30 seconds since his arrival, David knew that. He was wearing *mountaineering boots*, for God’s sake. Oh well, David thought, at least he’d have some eye candy, even if it was a ‘look but don’t touch’ type situation.

He realized perhaps a bit too late that Patrick was waiting for an answer. David had thought it might be more of a rhetorical question, considering David’s bedding was on this one, and he was literally standing atop the mattress sticking posters to the wall. Or trying to, rather. So he nodded a little raggedly and tried to find a smile that resembled something a friendly, normal human would wear. “Oh, mmhmm.” He said, not trusting himself to say much more.

Patrick leaned down and with a little grunt of effort, lifted up a very full and heavy looking hockey bag, shouldered it, and dumped it unceremoniously onto his bed. Then he returned to the hallway and grabbed a tall laundry basket that seemed to be stuffed with sheets, a comforter, and a pillow, and set it beside the bed. The Roses all watched in silence as he efficiently and confidently moved the items from the hallway, his parents blessedly quiet for the first time perhaps in his entire life. Patrick apparently only had the two things, so when he’d set the laundry basket down, he turned towards them and smiled.

“Well, you pack light.” David managed to say, because he had to say *something.* And Patrick’s smile widened.

“I have a few more things down in my car.” He replied, shrugging, and there was that *smirk* again. “You need any help?” He asked, his tone casual and friendly, but still David got this strange impression that he was being teased. And he didn’t know if he liked it or not. But he sort of liked it.
Move-in day part 2: Patrick

Chapter Summary

Move in Day, but from Patrick's perspective! Takes us a little further in the story than David's chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Well, the day had finally come. He was a year later than most of his friends, but he’d finally done it. Patrick had known for most of his life that his parents didn’t have the means to put him through university, so he’d been working in some capacity since he was old enough to deliver newspapers, or mow lawns, or eventually work in the local movie rental store.

He’d been saving almost every dollar he could, to minimize the debt he would have to take on to complete his undergraduate, and eventual masters degrees. Not a lot of things scared Patrick like the prospect of debt. Debt meant interest. And the only time interest was a good thing was when you were on the receiving end. He hadn’t even began his business degree yet, and he already knew that.

So he’d locked up almost every penny he earned in a high interest savings account he’d taken out at age 11, when he’d gotten his first paper route, much to the chagrin of his (very recently) ex-girlfriend Rachel. She hadn’t much appreciated his-- thrifty-- ways. But he just couldn’t bear the thought of adding to his eventual debt, especially for something as trivial or short lived as dinner or a movie with his high school girlfriend.

He guessed he understood where she was coming from… he looked around and he saw all his other friends spending money on their girlfriends. But he also knew that most of them were doing it just to try to get into their pants. They would much rather spend their money on video games or beer than perfume or concert tickets to Taylor Swift or Justin Bieber, but they did it because they were slaves to their dicks.

Well, Patrick wasn’t a slave to his dick. He alternated between feeling proud of that fact, and feeling worried by it. On the one hand, he couldn’t help this slightly condescending stance he’d take when appraising and judging his buddies’ behaviours, when it came to girls. He’d always somehow felt a little above the rest of them, because he didn’t turn into a caveman whenever a nice pair of tits or a tight ass was near. That made him more modern, more evolved, right?

Either that, or it made him broken. But he didn’t like thinking about that, and was very practiced in
forcing the thought from his mind. But the truth was, he had never cared much either way about getting into Rachel’s pants. Sure, he was a teenager and thus horny as hell, but he didn’t see much difference between sex with her and the relief he’d get from taking care of things himself. In fact, he kind of preferred his solo adventures, although sex was pretty good too, he supposed. But it wasn’t some be-all end-all thing his friends made it out to be. There was no reason to destabilize his financial future in order to get more of something he was ambivalent about at best to begin with.

But that’s what worried him. That wasn’t normal. He felt different than everyone else, but he couldn’t quite put his finger on why. He’d grown up in a small town outside of Thunder Bay, in a place where everyone was pretty much the same. There were very few people that stood out, save for a few punks and goths at his school. After middle school, he’d had to be bussed 45 minutes into the city to attend high school, that’s how small his hometown was. There were expectations there, of what a man was, just because that’s the way it was and always had been. Patrick had been presented precisely one mold, and had just found that it never fit right.

It should have been easy, it should have been relieving. Knowing exactly what was expected. Fitting into that mold should have been as easy and natural as fitting into an old, worn baseball glove. His friends fit in perfectly. It was easy for them, natural. They were beer drinking, sports loving, girl-crazy, idiots with balls where their brains should be. They wore formless, shapeless sports t-shirts, sometimes with plaid flannel thrown over top, and baggy, sagging jeans they hadn’t washed in a year. They always had a baseball cap on. They used words like ‘bro’ and ‘dude’ in almost every sentence. They all fit into the mold so perfectly, Patrick had always been jealous. He was some of those things, but not all of them. And deep down, he knew he never would be.

And so he’d counted down the days til he could move away. Yes, he’d needed to take an extra year after graduating to save his money, but that was okay. Because eventually, if he worked hard, he would get to leave this place. He would get to break free of the mold, redefine himself if he wanted to. He wanted to escape. He needed to escape. He felt if he didn’t, he might suffocate.

Poor Rachel. He’d really honestly loved her, in his own way. But never in the way she wanted. He told himself it was because he always knew he was going to leave. He never wanted to stay in the town he grew up in, so why get attached to her? People grew up and left their high school girlfriends, he told himself. It happened all the time. That must be why he never got into her the way he should have been. It was the only thing that made sense.

And it hadn’t been like he’d led her on, he tried to tell himself. He’d broken up with her several times, in fact. When she’d pick a fight with him, because she wanted him to act a way he wasn’t acting, or feel a way he wasn’t feeling. He’d be honest with her, but she’d always insist on getting back together. And she was persistent. Eventually, he’d always cave.

But not this time. He’d been very clear that when he left, it was over for good. So he felt like a
weight had been lifted, the moment he’d finished packing his car up, and put it into drive. And he
continued to feel lighter, with every kilometer he put between himself and his old life. The drive
was going to take over fifteen hours, and he had no one to switch off with. But he didn’t care. He
was free.

What that freedom meant, he had no idea. But Goddamn was he excited about it.

Patrick arrived in his marked parking spot in the Lady Eaton parking lot about an hour later than
he’d been hoping. His skin had been crawling for the last two hours, as he worried about missing
even a minute of his first day of orientation. He’d stupidly decided to take the rural highways,
because he had some time to kill and he’d always been one to enjoy taking the scenic route. But
he’d taken a wrong turn somewhere in the Kawartha Lakes and a closed road had detoured him
even farther. It had been stressful, to say the least, as he saw his arrival time get pushed farther and
farther back on his GPS.

But that didn’t matter anymore, he was here now. And it looked like lots of other people were still
arriving, too, and that made him feel a little better. So, not wanting to waste another second, Patrick
hopped out of his parents’ old Elantra and hurried off in the direction the signs and yellow-t-shirted
people were indicating. On the way he took in the beauty of the courtyard, and smelled the fresh,
clean air that reminded him of home, and he smiled. He smiled because it reminded him of home,
but it wasn’t home. Although it would be soon.

Registration took a while, the line was long because he’d arrived so late. But eventually he’d gotten
his key and his tote bag full of things emblazoned with the name ‘Trent’ and the green circle
containing the river and sword or their logo. He couldn’t deny he had butterflies, as he made his
way back to his car to grab his bag and whatever else he could carry. He was about to move into
his new room. His new home. The home he shared with another guy. Another guy who was
probably up there, right now, considering how late Patrick was arriving.

He couldn’t ignore the swooping excited/nervous feeling that started in his gut and moved up to his
chest as he thought about it. He’d been thinking about it, a lot, actually. About what it would be
like sharing a small room with another guy. What he’d be like. Would he be athletic? Artistic?
Funny? Good looking?

He didn’t know why he kept wondering if this stranger he’d only imagined in his head so far would
be good looking. It’s not like it mattered, he didn’t think. Maybe he was subconsciously wondering
if he’d be a threat, when it came to girls? But that didn’t make much sense either… Patrick had
never cared about girls, not that much. But surely that would change, now that he was in
University, right? He put the thought aside.
So, with butterflies in his stomach, he’d scanned his card at the middle door of the north building, as he was instructed, and climbed the stairs up to the second floor. When he got to the landing, he looked left and right to determine which way the numbers were going, and headed to the right. There was a general bustle all around him, noises of people chatting and laughing and getting to know each other, parents saying goodbye, etc. But as Patrick moved down the hall, a set of voices rose above the rest. Someone was arguing with their parents, and Patrick had to stifle a laugh as he began to make out what they were saying.

“Up! Up, David!” He heard a woman’s voice cry. Her accent was strange, he couldn’t place it. It was almost British, but there was something about the way she pronounced David as ‘Day-ved’ that didn’t seem quite right. “Not the whole thing, the right side!” She added, and her voice was becoming clearer as he moved towards it.

“Well you didn’t say that, did you?” Snapped back a younger voice, a guy’s. His voice was musical and pleasant, though he was clearly annoyed by his parents, evidenced by the slightly shrill tone he was taking. He sounded different than anyone Patrick had ever heard before. He couldn’t picture the owner of that voice saying something like ‘giv’er’ or ‘bro’ or ‘dude’. He smiled to himself, feeling a little thrill at the thought. He wasn’t in Kansas anymore. He’d been in his new dorm for all of 2 seconds, and it already felt like a whole new world. Which was exactly what he wanted.

As he moved down the never-ending hallway, the voices continued to get louder, until he finally stopped at the door of his room (there was even a sign on the wall that said “David & Patrick”), he realized the voices were coming from his room. And he couldn’t help but chuckle at the odds.

He felt a little weird about interrupting, but stuck his head through the door, intending to catch someone’s eye and introduce himself. But no one was looking at him. The two parents, the mother in an extremely elaborate and expensive looking outfit and what he could only assume was a wig, and the father in an extremely polished (and also expensive looking) business suit, were both facing towards their son, who Patrick had to assume was David. They were shouting directions at him as he stood on his bed and held a George Michael poster against the wall.

He’d meant to announce his presence, when he realized they hadn’t noticed him, but the words seemed to die in his throat as he watched the scene with amusement. Quietly, he lowered his bag to the ground and leaned against the doorway to enjoy the show.

“The blue stuff is getting less sticky!” The boy (David, he reminded himself) complained, completely exasperated, as he pulled the poster off the wall and began following his parents barking commands. Patrick lifted his knuckles to his mouth and pressed against his lips, trying to keep from laughing. Or smiling, too, but he was failing at that. He could feel his grin tighten his
cheeks as he watched as David’s mother and father contradict each other in their attempts to “help” their poor son.

“Tilt! Tilt!” His mother urged.

“Which way!?” David wailed back, and Patrick had to press his lips together firmly to stop from laughing. These people were, without a doubt, the most foreign and strange creatures he had ever seen in real life. It was like he’d left home in his parents’ old Elantra, and somehow ended up on an alien planet. There wasn’t a poly/cotton blend on a single one of them, and Patrick got the impression that none of them had sweat a day in their lives, unless it was on some tropical beach or in a sauna. It was like they were an entirely new species, when compared to the people he’d grown up with.

He loved it.

He watched David from behind, using his unseen presence as an opportunity to size up the guy he’d apparently be sharing 120 square feet with for the rest of the year. At first he was just struck by his height, though surely the fact that he was standing on a bed was making him seem taller than he was. He had black hair, kept tight around the neck and styled perfectly at the top where it was longer. He was wearing a black sweater that was pretty form fitting, and was probably made of something extremely soft, like cashmere. He watched as his shoulders flexed as he moved the poster, visible through the sweater.

And then Patrick’s eyes travelled down. David was wearing the tightest pants Patrick had ever seen on a guy. He told himself that that was why he was looking. Why he couldn’t seem to look away. Because it was just so… new. But like, in the best possible way. And hell, Patrick wasn’t so uncivilized that he couldn’t appreciate a good ass when he saw one, was he? Because David had a great ass. Patrick could attest, because it was currently at eye level, only a few feet away, framed by a tight pair of acid washed jeans that left nothing to the imagination.

Not that Patrick was imagining anything. That would be weird. He was just noticing. Because he wasn’t blind. Because you’d have to be blind, to ignore an ass like that. It didn’t mean anything.

He’d been zoned out for a few seconds when David snapped back at his mother. “Which way is the other way!? ” He demanded, and Patrick felt himself smile again in amusement. Poor David. Patrick hadn’t even met them and he could tell his parents were a lot. It also seemed that David might be prone to dramatics, though time would tell on that one. But Patrick didn’t mind. He thought it might keep things interesting, as long as he didn’t turn that fiery fury on him too often.
And then David was whirling around to face his parents, and his eyes caught Patrick’s. Dark, bottomless brown eyes that went wide with surprise, framed by expressive thick black brows. His teeth were clenched in a furious grimace, which relaxed and transformed to an entirely different kind of grimace (more of embarrassment rather than anger, if grimaces could be distinguished from one another) as he realized he wasn’t alone.

“Oh…” David said, lamely, and Patrick smirked.

“Sorry to interrupt.” Patrick replied. And he didn’t know why, but he realized he was trying to act cool. He wanted to impress David, for whatever reason. Probably because he was going to be his new roommate, and he wanted them to be friends. It had nothing to do with those pants. Nothing at all.

So he stayed there, leaning against the door frame, and just ever so slightly smirked up at him. He found the entire scene pretty hilarious, and David was clearly mortified by it, which Patrick also found funny for some reason. His first impression of his new roommate was that he was dramatic and expressive. And Patrick thought that was going to be a lot of fun.

“Ummm,” David said, clearly flustered by Patrick’s sudden appearance, and he seemed to freeze there, not saying anything beyond that. With his words, that was. Because his face was saying a lot of things. He was so Goddamn expressive that Patrick almost laughed out loud in wonder. The expression he’d landed on eventually seemed to say ‘who are you?’, so Patrick decided to throw him a bone and introduce himself.

“Hi, I’m Patrick.” He said, holding David’s gaze confidently. He loved how it made him squirm a little, but despite his apparent discomfort, David boldly held it in return until Patrick turned to make eye contact with both of his Parents. His name had brought on blank looks of incomprehension from all of them, so it was clear none of them had read the sign on the door that said ‘David & Patrick’, and had no idea who he was. Again, he found that funny, for some reason, and couldn’t help himself from returning his focus to David and giving him a teasing smile. “So I guess that’s my bed?” He asked, pointing at the bed opposite David’s.

David’s eyes went wide at the realization, and then his face went on another one of its wonderful journeys. Once again he’d frozen for just a little too long for social convention, and Patrick’s smile widened in amusement as he waited for a reply. Eventually David cleared his throat, pursed his lips, and then nodded his head. “Oh, mmmhmm.” He said, and Patrick resisted the urge to wink at David (seriously, what was coming over him?) and he turned to hoist his heavy hockey bag full of belongings onto his shoulder.

He dumped the bag on his bed, which incidentally happened to be the one he’d have chosen anyways, which was a bonus. It had way better light. Then he turned back to the hall and grabbed
the tall soft laundry basket full of bedding he’d managed to carry up from the car somehow, despite the weight of his hockey bag.

As he moved, David and his parents just watched him in silence, all of their mouths hanging open just a little, as if his presence was entirely unexpected. Which, they should have honestly expected, considering David was moving into a double room. But for whatever reason, Patrick found that funny as well. So he placed the laundry basket next to the bed, turned to face them all, and smiled genially.

“Well, you pack light.” David said finally, and Patrick felt his smile widen.

“I have a few more things down in my car.” He replied, not elaborating further. He didn’t really have all that much that hadn’t fit into his huge hockey bag, but he did have his guitar that he’d have to run down and grab soon. He didn’t want it sitting in the hot car for too long. It may have been Labour Day, but it was still as hot as hell. Thank God this dorm had air conditioning, he thought absently. “You need any help?” He asked brightly, teasing David just subtly, and enjoyed the fact that David seemed to catch on quickly, if judging by the way his face turned a little flushed and he rolled his eyes back and braced his temples briefly with his fingers dramatically.

But then he seemed to rein in control of his features, and contorted his face from a look of pure tortured agony, to one that might not look out of place on a customer service agent in a Rogers commercial. It was quite the sight to behold, and again Patrick had to try not to laugh. He didn’t even know this guy, he shouldn’t be so amused by him, so intrigued. But he reasoned that that was probably just because he was so happy to be away from home… he was just in a good mood.

“Okay, first of all, hello Patrick. I’m David, and these are my parents, Moira and Johnny.” He introduced himself, though didn’t give Patrick enough time to shake their hands before continuing, his voice becoming more emphatic as he spoke. “And second of all, as I was telling my parents, this is not a three person job. And it certainly isn’t a four person job.” He said, gesturing wildly as he spoke. “So thank-you, but I can do it myself!”

And then David was whirling back around. He unstuck the blue-tac, adjusted it to align with the Mariah Carey poster next to it without the benefit of a peanut gallery, and stuck it back to the wall. Then he took a step back to admire his work, and Patrick took a step forward as he did, eyes wide and arms ready to reach out and catch him. He’d stepped dangerously close to the edge of the bed.

Patrick felt confused and embarrassed by his reaction the second he’d done it, when he realized David was fine, and Patrick was a complete stranger to him. He told himself he just didn’t want his new roommate to fall and crack his head open, like any other decent human being. Patrick felt the heat rising in his cheeks, and he hoped no one had noticed his reaction. Their eyes had been on David and his dramatics, after all.
Johnny’s eyes had remained on his son, but Moira’s had moved to Patrick’s face. Damn, she’d seen him. And now she was really seeing him. He felt uncomfortable, under her intense scrutiny. Her eyes pierced into him as she seemed to contemplate his very existence. While they were having this silent and tense little moment, David whirled back around, unaware of what had happened.

“See? Perfect. And I didn’t need any help.” He said smugly, and stood there, hands on hips, wearing a proud smile, and his eyes met Patrick’s almost in challenge. And despite the weirdness of the last 30 seconds, Patrick felt another smile tug at the corners of his lips. David was so damn smug and self satisfied. His arms crossed over his chest and he held his chin up, almost posing in triumph. Patrick noticed the way this made his sweater tug over his biceps, and he thought that David must like to work out, at least a little bit. And for some reason an image of him, sweaty and wearing a loose tank top, flashed through his head.

And for a second, the tension in the room rose, and Patrick’s smile faltered. But then, as if a gift from the universe, the poster slumped forward off the wall, the blue-tac giving up, and it hit David square in the head. Where an instant earlier there had been tension, now there was the loud sound of paper being hit, and David’s yelp of surprise, and Patrick’s surprised laugh as well.

David placed the poster beside him, reaching up to fix his hair and clearing his throat, trying to recompose himself, act as though he hadn’t just been gloating about his perfect poster placement an instant before the thing came crashing down hilariously onto his head. When he thought he’d succeeded, he cleared his throat again. “Okay, but can we all agree that the placement was perfect, before it fell down?” He asked, and Patrick laughed. Again. He’d known David for all of five minutes, and how many times had this guy made him laugh already?

As David descended from the bed, Patrick noticed David’s mother looking at him again, and felt the heat rise in his cheeks in response. “John, dear, I think we should let the boys settle in.” She said in her strange accent, though there was a softness to her voice now that he hadn’t been able to hear when she’d been crying directions at her son earlier. She looked at Patrick the whole time she spoke, as if he was a puzzle she was trying to figure out.

“Okay, Dear, it is getting a little later than we’d planned to be leaving, I suppose.” He agreed, and Patrick got the impression he agreed with a lot of what his wife said, just because he wanted to please her. This woman might be outrageously dramatic, but Patrick could tell by the way David’s father looked at her, that he loved her very much. It made Patrick feel happy for some reason, despite not even knowing these people.

“Peter, it was a pleasure to meet you, but I’m afraid we can’t dally much longer. I must abscond with my husband and return to the city.” She said, and he smiled a little uncomfortably.
“He said his name was Patrick.” David cut in, unexpectedly, and Patrick’s smile turned from uncomfortable to genuine. David had remembered his name. Not that that was some big noteworthy thing, and could even be considered common courtesy. But his mother had forgotten, and David remembered. Why did that make him happy?

“That’s okay…” Patrick cut in, not wanting David’s mother to feel badly about forgetting. Although, he didn’t think she could have possibly cared less about her mistake.

“Yes, Patrick, it was a pleasure to meet you.” Johnny cut in, reaching out his hand for Patrick to shake. Patrick attempted his very best handshake, firm and decisive, wanting to impress the man with the expensive suit and eyebrows that his son had clearly inherited. Johnny’s shake was firm and confident, and Patrick hoped his own was as well.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir.” Patrick replied, and suddenly, he realized that David’s parents were leaving, and he was standing right in the middle of their goodbye. “I’m going to head down and grab the rest of my stuff. Maybe give you guys a minute to say goodbye?” He added, and Moira smiled that soft smile at him again, and nodded slightly.

“Thank you, Peter.” She said.

“Patrick.” David corrected, though if she’d heard him she gave no indication. She just kept her eyes locked on Patrick.

“Take care of my boy.” She added, directly to Patrick, and he felt his heart clench a little. He smiled nervously and nodded, and mumbled something in reply, though he doesn’t know quite what, and he turned to leave the room. Though, right before leaving, his eye caught David’s, and he felt this tugging at the back of his brain, but then the split-second moment was over, and he was walking back down through the long straight hallway, dodging around people coming in and out of their rooms, all he could think of were those brown eyes.

On the way inside with his guitar case, Patrick had been stopped by a small group of people playing hacky-sack outside. They saw his Death From Above 1979 sticker and asked if he knew
any songs, and while they chatted, he saw David’s parents walk by, though he didn’t think they saw him. And knowing they were gone, suddenly all Patrick wanted to do was go get to know his new roommate. These stoner guys were great, and Patrick was sure he’d probably burn one down with them on many occasions, but they had all year to talk about rock and roll.

He politely detached himself from the group a couple minutes later, happy to have met new people he could see himself hanging out with from time to time, but even happier about settling into his room. And okay, sure, the fact that his handsome new roommate was up there didn’t hurt, either.

Wait, did Patrick just think of David as handsome? Why did that matter?

On his way upstairs, one of the upper-year students in the yellow Lady Eaton t-shirts informed him that in 15 minutes they’d be calling everyone down to the courtyard, and they’d be doing welcome activities. She also warned him not to wear anything he’d mind getting dirty, whatever that meant, and the first thing he thought was that he had to warn David. He had a feeling he’d have a major problem with getting his current outfit dirty. Patrick tried to imagine David’s horror, getting grass stains on his (probably $300) acid-washed jeans.

But then Patrick was just thinking about David’s jeans, and then suddenly the mental image of his ass in those jeans kept floating to the forefront. Patrick stepped quicker, entering the building from a doorway farther down, closer to the parking lot, not realizing it wasn’t the same one he’d gone through the first time. When he got to the second floor, he realized his mistake, and started making his way down through the long, straight hallway towards his room.

The building was long, and straight. There were no turns in the halls, though you couldn’t see straight through from one end to the other, because these strange, galley-like bathrooms broke up the hallway every so often. They had swinging, heavy doors, and you’d walk straight through them as you continued your way down the hallway. On either side of the walls between the swinging doors, there were locking doors to small rooms, each room containing either a toilet, a sink, or a shower.

It was the strangest fucking thing. So, to get to your friend’s room down the hall, you had to walk through a bathroom? He shrugged, accepting it, thought it really was very bizarre. He passed through two of these little galley-style bathrooms before he got to his own section of the building. For some reason, the closer he got, the more his nerves were playing up, and it was almost like there were butterflies in his stomach.

And then he was there, and the butterflies were practically in his throat. Taking a deep breath, Patrick pushed open the door that was just slightly ajar, and stepped inside.
David was bent over his bed, arranging his books on the shelf built into the wall beside the bed, but he turned around immediately upon hearing the door creak, announcing Patrick’s arrival. “Oh, it’s you.” He said, and he seemed surprised, but maybe it was just that he’d startled him. “Hi… Patrick.” He added, a little awkwardly.

“Hi… David.” Patrick replied, mimicking the way David had said it, teasing him again because he was compelled to, for whatever reason, and enjoying the way David’s brows narrowed and his lips compressed and twisted to the side, like he was trying not to smile.

“So I was hoping they would be gone before you got here.” David stolidly pressed on, and Patrick laughed once. He obviously meant his parents.

“Yeah, I got that impression.”

“So I’m sorry you… had to see that. That isn’t the kind of first impression I was hoping to make…” David replied, and Patrick shook his head once.

“Nah, it’s all good. It was kind of funny.” Then Patrick looked up at the wall. “The posters look great, by the way.” He added, and David rolled his eyes.

“I did that all in five minutes, by myself, after they left. They’re the worst. But I’m kind of in trouble, and I didn’t want to make it worse, so I had to let them leave on their own.” He explained, and Patrick found himself intrigued.

“They didn’t seem too mad at you.” He reasoned.

“Yeah, well, that’s because I’ve been doing damage control for some time now. I am in a very precarious truce-scenario, where I’m supposed to prove myself, somehow. So I have been very respectful and controlled in my responses to them, lately.” David explained. “It’s been exhausting. Thank God they’re finally gone.” He added, and Patrick chuckled.

“That was you being very respectful and controlled?” He asked, and David scowled.

“I’ll have you know my parents are a lot. I’d like to see you last 2 hours with them, let alone 5
months of veritable *house arrest!*” He replied, and Patrick felt his curiosity pique. There was a story there.

“They did seem like a lot.” Patrick conceded, deciding to give some solidarity to his new roommate, rather than challenge and tease him at every opportunity. He wanted David to *like* him, he realized.

“Thank you.” David said, and Patrick watched as a dimple formed in his cheek as he smiled tightly.

Patrick faltered for a second, silence spreading throughout the room, when he realized he hadn’t properly introduced himself. Where were his manners? His father had raised him better than that, he scolded himself inwardly. So Patrick stepped towards David, and held out his hand. “Patrick *Brewer,* by the way. I didn’t properly introduce myself earlier.” He said, and David looked down at his hand, and then up at his face. Then he reached out and gripped it.

And *how* was his hand so soft? How was that even possible? It was like it was made of silk. Patrick’s brain seemed to short circuit for a second, he was so caught off guard. David’s handshake was nothing like his Father’s. It was terrible for business, really, too soft and tentative. Normally Patrick looked for a firm handshake in anyone he was meeting, but for some reason it didn’t bother him this time. In fact, some of those butterflies were back, much to his chagrin.

“David Rose.” His roommate said in reply, and Patrick felt his eyes go wide in recognition.

“Wait… is your Dad Johnny *Rose,* Like, from--”

“Rose Video? Yes, the very same.” David interrupted, seeming extremely unimpressed by this fact.

“Wow, I just met the CEO of Rose Video…” Patrick replied, a little awestruck.

“How did you know?” David asked suspiciously, and Patrick shrugged.

“I’ve been working at Rose Video since I was 16. Worked my way to Assistant Manager, last year. I had to take a year off after high school to save up for University.” He explained
“Oh, I took a year off too. But, not to save. I actually did the opposite of save. That’s kind of why I’m in trouble. So you’re 19?” David asked, and Patrick nodded.

“In June.” He answered, and David’s eyes seemed to light up.

“July.” David said in reply, pointing at himself. “That means we can go to bars together! I’d heard they’re really strict on ID in college towns like this, I worried my roommate would be 18 and we’d never get to go clubbing together.” He replied, and Patrick felt his eyes widen fractionally, but he restrained his features as best he could. Clubbing? Patrick had never been to a nightclub in his life. Dirty dive bars? Yes. But a nightclub? He felt a bubble of excitement rise in his chest.

“How did you know we’d even be friends?” Patrick asked, teasing a little despite his excitement. He couldn’t seem to help it with this guy.

“Of course we’d be friends, we took one of those personality thingies, didn’t we? Besides, everyone likes me.” David replied, and Patrick smiled, catching a slightly self-deprecating tone to the otherwise confident statement.

“Oh come on, you weren’t a little nervous? I know I was.” Patrick replied. And he was smiling crookedly at David, giving him the out he needed to tell the truth. David seemed to regard him for a second, and his face went on a quick journey before firming up and nodding slightly.

“Okay, maybe a little.” David conceded. “Okay, a lot. I was worried you might be unhygienic, mostly. But so far, you seem… clean.” He said, and Patrick laughed.

“Thanks, I guess?” Patrick replied, and David nodded.

“And I lied earlier, when I said everyone likes me. That’s not always the case. Like my parents, I know I can be a lot. But I’ll, umm, do my best to be a good roommate. And you don’t have to worry about me, I’m clean, too.” He said, and Patrick didn’t know why but he found the way he spoke so endearing. The contrast of the stark bravado a moment before and the honest vulnerability of this admission were put both sides of David at odds with each other, and Patrick found it charming. And a little sad, that David would be apologizing for himself already, when he’d done nothing wrong. Patrick wanted to help with that self confidence, he realized, not knowing where the idea had come from. But it was true.
“You look clean.” Patrick replied dumbly, and okay he did not mean to give David a once-over with his eyes when he did. What the hell was wrong with him? But he had to move on, say something to cover the awkwardness of the moment, so he continued. “And don’t worry, I can already tell we’re going to be friends.”

“Because of the personality thingie that matched us up?” David asked, and Patrick laughed and shook his head. He didn’t know how to tell David that he’d lied on almost every answer on that test, so he didn’t. He just didn’t want to answer honestly when it came to how athletic and into sports he was, because he wanted to meet new types of people in university. The last thing he wanted was to be roomed with yet another bro.

He could already tell it had been the best decision he’d ever made. He wasn’t lying when he told David he thought they were going to be friends. Even on short acquaintance, Patrick felt compelled by David. He was extremely glad they’d been paired up. He didn’t know where he’d ever have met a guy like this, in Thunder Bay. “No, because I like you, and I can tell we’re going to be friends.” Patrick replied honestly, confidently, and enjoyed the flush that brought up in David’s cheeks.

“Oh…” He replied, and he seemed just a little flustered, so Patrick smirked at him. And then he remembered what he’d been told on the way in.

“Hey, they told me on the way in that we were going to to be called down in fifteen minutes. And that was probably ten minutes ago.”

“Oh, okay.” David replied, but he raised an eyebrow at Patrick’s amused expression once he noticed it, realizing there was more news.

“She said not to wear anything you wouldn’t want to get dirty.” He said, trying to maintain a poker face but failing a little, he thought. David’s facial journey was spectacular.

“Well that excludes my entire wardrobe!” David replied, his voice rising with dramatic despair.

“Come on, you don’t have a single t-shirt you can throw on?” Patrick asked in response, skeptically.

“All of my t-shirts are designer. And I am not wearing a Burberry v-neck if there is any chance that it could be stained.” David replied, scandalized by the very thought.
“Okay, well, I think there was a grey Trent t-shirt in the welcome bag.” Patrick suggested. Helpfully, he hoped. But David replied with just a skeptical scowl, and just shook his head. “Oh come on, what’s wrong with that, you can’t possibly care if it gets dirty.” Patrick continued.

“You’re right, I don’t care if it gets dirty. But you can’t wear the free t-shirt everyone got on the first day, Patrick. I’m not some basic bitch.” He replied, and Patrick almost choked as he laughed in response.

“I didn’t say you were a basic bitch.” He said, chuckling, and David glared at him, though he was clearly holding back a smile, his lips twisted to the side of his face.

“No, but you implied it, when you suggested I wear the welcome bag swag to our very first day.” He replied, and Patrick just shook his head and stared at David in wonder.

“Okay, well how about I lend you a t-shirt then?” He suggested, struggling for ideas at this point. They were running out of time, Patrick imagined they’d be called down any minute.

“You’d do that?” David asked, uncertain. And for once, the teasing smile faltered on Patrick’s face, and was replaced with a much warmer one. He nodded once, and then shrugged.

“Of course, what are new roommates and future best friends for?” Patrick replied, the teasing tone back in his voice, and he saw David crack the smile he was looking for.

“Ok, let’s not get carried away. I don’t even know if I like you yet.” David said, and Patrick beamed.

“Oh, you’re gonna love me, David.” He replied confidently, and felt a little bit of a thrill at the response this seemed to bring out in David, who had become flustered. Patrick didn’t usually like messing with people this much. Or at all. He didn’t really know what had come over him, but it seemed so natural with David, he couldn’t help himself.

“Okay, well…” David said, trailing off, and Patrick smirked as he turned away and walked the couple steps over to his own bed where his bag lay. He dug inside for a minute before finding his shirts, and then he pulled out two options and turned to show David.

“Blue, or grey?” Patrick asked, holding each forward as he said its colour. David just stared at him
for a beat, one luscious and full eyebrow arched in judgement before he spoke.

“What do I look like a blue t-shirt person to you?” He asked, seriously.

“...No?” Patrick responded unsure.

“Correct, no.” David nodded, and Patrick huffed a laugh.

“So grey it is.” Patrick replied, tossing the shirt the couple feet towards David, who fumbled to catch it, kind of adorably.

“Oh--okay.” He said, when he’d managed to stop himself from dropping it. “I didn’t know we were going to be playing sports in the tiny dorm room.” He said, and Patrick laughed. Then he gestured to the shirt in David’s hand with his chin.

“That okay?” Patrick asked, and for some reason found himself invested in his hope that it would please David, even though it was just a plain old grey t-shirt he’d probably picked up on sale from West 49 some time in high school. David held it up before him and gave it an appraising glance.

“I can make this work. I think with my black jeans…”

“You’re not going to wear shorts?” Patrick cut in. It was blazing hot outside, and he had a feeling whatever the group activity was going to be, it was going to be physical.

“I don’t mix short sleeves with short sleeves. I’m not going to the gym.” David replied, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. Then he looked down at the t-shirt in his hands, and then up at Patrick.

And then suddenly it hit him. They shared a room. They had to get changed, and they shared a room. Patrick was going to be living with David, in extremely close quarters, for the next year. He’d known it before, but suddenly the reality of the situation came slamming home, and with it, a wave of excitement. Patrick had passed some open doors on the walk from the car, and had passed at least two guys without shirts on. Patrick knew that back home, he or his friends wouldn’t have hesitated before changing in front of one another. They’d all been on sports teams since they were little kids, after all.
Why did it seem so much different, here, in the privacy of his room, with only David there to see him?

Patrick wanted to take his shirt and his shorts down the hall to the galley bathroom, and to disappear behind one of the locking doors. But he didn’t. It was an insane impulse. He had to get over it. He was being ridiculous. So he took a deep breath, and he pulled down the zipper on his hoodie, and shrugged it off his shoulders. David’s eyes went a little wide as he did, and he seemed to purposefully look away, but Patrick thought he saw his eyes trail back.

He was trying not to look at David, although for some reason he also really wanted to look at David. It was the weirdest thing. With only a little hesitation, Patrick pulled his Hollerado t-shirt over his head and turned to toss it onto his bed. He stood up straight, aware of the fact that he was flexing his abs as he turned back towards David, and tensing his biceps.

His eye caught David’s, and he smirked and shrugged, and then suddenly David was tugging his sweater carefully over his head. Patrick’s heart started to race. Why was this so weird? David was wearing a white undershirt, which he pulled off after a moment’s hesitation, revealing a fairly toned, smooth broad chest.

Patrick only realized he was staring when David’s eyes met his own, and he felt his whole body flush with the knowledge of being caught. Unfortunately, this was especially obvious, because Patrick was pale from having worked inside all summer, and not currently wearing a shirt. There was a very pregnant pause, as they both seemed to freeze awkwardly, standing there before each other, shirtless. In the bedroom they shared together. This was weird. This was so weird. Why was this weird?

Patrick had been around shirtless guys his entire life. He’s been shirtless around his friends more times than he could count. Why was this, now, any different. Without meaning to, his eyes went down to David’s chest, and then he jerked them back up to meet his eyes when he realized what he’d done. He must look like a deer in the headlights, he thought.

Suddenly there was a banging from down the hall, and voices shouting. “Everyone down to the courtyard! Five minute warning! No exceptions!” They kept repeating that, or a variation of it, banging on doors until they’d passed by their room and probably one of the galley bathrooms, because their racket was suddenly a lot quieter.

Patrick and David had stood there, shirtless, the entire time. But when the noise had finally died down, the tension in the room felt lighter. Patrick found he was able to smile at David. “Here we go!” He said excitedly, and saw David grimace before he pulled the blue t-shirt over his head.
David watched him, and then pulled Patrick’s grey shirt over his own head, carefully maneuvering his head through the neck hole to minimize damage to his perfectly styled hair. But then it was on, and he looked amazing, wearing Patrick’s thin cotton v-neck. Patrick couldn’t stop staring.

“Well, it looks like you happen to be a blue t-shirt person.” David said, after a second, surprising Patrick. “You look good.” He added, and Patrick felt a strange flutter in his chest he couldn’t quite figure out.

“Thanks. So do you.” Patrick said, not knowing what else to say. That’s what he was supposed to say, right? He wasn’t expecting David to compliment his appearance. And if he had been, he wouldn’t have been expecting to like it so much. So he didn’t really know the protocol here. He was sure this was just how city people did things, that he and his hick friends had been sheltered and backwards, and that cultured people from places like Toronto or New York just freely complimented other men’s bodies. That it didn’t mean anything.

Patrick may have been getting some vibes that David wasn’t entirely straight, but it still didn’t mean anything. And was he even allowed to pick up on those vibes? It was technically making assumptions based on the way he talked, his vocal inflections as well as the words he used, and surely that was a dick move, on Patrick’s behalf? He felt a little guilty at least. Though, he still found himself wondering. Was David straight?

Did Patrick want him to be straight?

No. Something inside him said, startling him, but he shoved it aside immediately. He was in the middle of a conversation, he didn’t have time to examine that quite yet.

“Hmm, well, it’s not designer, but it’s very soft.” David said, running his hands down his stomach. Patrick watched them move.

“I’m pretty sure I paid six bucks for that shirt.” He replied, and laughed at the scandalized look on David’s face, and the way his hands jumped away from his stomach like the worn cotton had shocked him. “You regretting your choices?” He asked, teasing, and David placed one hand on his hip.

“Constantly. But this is fine. It’ll be better with my black jeans.” He replied, turning towards the built-in wall unit and pulling out a drawer, revealing rows of perfectly folded clothes. He scanned them briefly, before carefully extracting a black pair of pants. Patrick watched all this, fascinated, when some noise from the hall reminded him he had to hurry. So he turned to dig in his bag and grab a pair of cargo shorts.
His eyes locked with David’s for a second, and by some unspoken agreement that passed between
them, he turned his back to him, facing towards his bed, and undid the button at his waist and
unzipped his fly. Behind him, he could hear David do the same. With a deep breath, Patrick slid
his jeans down over his ass, letting them drop to the floor, and he kicked them aside. Briefly, he
wondered if David’s pants were off, too. And then whether David would peek. And he was a little
surprised by his reaction to that thought, how it made him a little excited. And yet again, he forced
the thought aside.

He was good at that, putting things away in boxes and forgetting about them. He couldn’t even
remember how many times he’d done it in the past, he was that good at it. So he grabbed his
shorts, and bent to put one foot in, and then the other. And he may have gotten a little off balance,
because he twisted and may have caught the fleeting-est of glimpses of David bent over, all black
boxer-briefs and pale thighs, but his head snapped back forward so quickly he couldn’t be sure.

He quickly did up his shorts, and could hear David struggling a little with his jeans, so he waited a
moment, then turned around. David was standing there, wearing Patrick’s thin grey t-shirt, over top
of tight, artfully ripped black jeans. The kind that came that way, and had probably cost $500. In
his old life, Patrick’s friends (and shamefully, Patrick himself, at times) would have made fun of
people who wore clothes like that. Thinking them rich and out of touch with the real world.

But Patrick liked those jeans. He liked those jeans with his six dollar shirt. He liked them on
David. His brain wanted to push those thoughts aside, too. Put them in a box and pack them away.
But why was it doing that? What was so wrong with admiring how David looked? He was in
University now, less than a two hour drive from Toronto. The big city! People were more worldly
here, more evolved. This was him just catching up to the rest of the world, wasn’t it? This was
nothing to be alarmed about, nothing to need to pack away?

Why was Patrick so fucking confused all of a sudden?

Thankfully, David broke the silence. “Cargo shorts?” He asked, his face twisted, his words
dripping with derision. And for some reason, instead of feeling insulted, Patrick wanted to laugh.
He did laugh, once, if for no other reason, than for the look on David’s face.

“Yes, what’s wrong with cargo shorts?” He asked in reply. He tried to shoot for serious, using his
poker face, like these were his favourite shorts in the world. Wanting to make David squirm a little.
David seemed to pause, and his face did another one of its journeys.

“Are you planning on wearing them with your mountaineering boots?” He asked, eventually, his
voice tight, and Patrick struggled not to smile.
“They’re hiking shoes, David.” He replied. David’s face turned sour.

“So that’s a yes, then.” He answered himself.

“I was planning on, it. Yes.” Patrick agreed. In all honesty, Patrick had just never before cared how he looked. He wasn’t trying to win any beauty pageants, just be prepared for whatever physical activity they had in store for them. He thought he was a lot better prepared than David was, but he wasn’t going to say anything. Partially because David looked so good, and Patrick didn’t want him to change outfits.

There was a long pause, while David regarded Patrick, as if he was trying to assess how serious he was. When he didn’t detect any hint of a joke, his expression turned to one of sympathy.

“Oh Patrick, Darling, that is incorrect in so many ways we don’t even have time to begin. I’m going to help you with this, I promise. You got the right roommate.” He said, and David was completely ripping apart Patrick’s appearance and wardrobe, but all Patrick could do was smile.

“Thanks, David. I think so too.” He answered, unsure where the words had come from the moment they left his mouth. But it was true. He did think he’d gotten the right roommate. David paused, clearly not expecting to hear such sincerity coming from Patrick when he was already become so used to being teased.

“Okay, well… let’s get going.” David said, stepping forward. But then he paused. “But last chance to rethink the cargo shorts. Or the shoes. There is only ever one shot at a first impression, Patrick.” He added, and Patrick bit the inside of his lip to keep from smiling.

“I’m good, David.” He said.

“You’re good.” David parroted back, unsure.

“Definitely good.” Patrick said, smiling now. He was excited. It was the first day of the rest of his life. He was about to attend orientation, to meet new people and learn about his new life and what to expect. And it already felt like he was doing it with a partner. He knew he’d just met David, and they didn’t really even know each other yet. But Patrick felt a connection, a bond forming, already.
He placed his hand on David’s shoulder and squeezed, shaking him slightly.

“Okay, David, let’s go.” He agreed, and he steered David out the door and into the busy hallway. He locked the door, and they walked down the hall to start this new grand adventure together.

And for some reason, it felt *right*.

Chapter End Notes

Please let me know what you think! I'm fully planning on putting a TON of time into this story lol as long as people want to read it! Hoping you guys liked Patrick's perspective and are looking forward to his journey of self discovery!
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Bonds are being forged and friendships created. Patrick and David are really clicking.
Will a misunderstanding ruin everything?

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! First of all I'm sorry this chapter has been so long delayed. I had a side project that had to come out before meet the parents aired, and then this chapter ended up being a 10k monster lol

But this is the only thing I'm writing/focused on right now, so I'm thinking chapters can be expected to be pretty lengthy, and to come out weekly.

I hope you enjoy the boys getting closer and Patrick figuring some stuff out about himself! Lol

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patrick and David walked down the long hallway together, on the way back from their first meal since arriving. It had been an outdoor barbecue, and they were in great spirits. Stevie and Twyla were also in tow, the two people he and David seemed to have hit it off the best with so far. Well, mostly Stevie. David had been grouped with her for one of the day’s activities and they’d hit it off immediately, and he’d introduced Patrick to her when they’d all been grouped for the last team building competition.

Stevie was thorny and funny, and had the best deadpan Patrick had ever heard. Sarcasm dripped off of almost every word she uttered, and she seemed to have taken to teasing David with almost equal enthusiasm to Patrick, so he liked her immediately. She was pretty, and they got along, but Patrick didn’t find himself wondering about her that way. Twyla either, for that matter, who was equally beautiful, if in a more girl-next-door wholesome sort of way.

Twyla was Stevie’s roommate, and she may not have fit in with them quite as well, if it weren’t for that fact. She was bright and cheery and a little bit dopey, and Patrick thought she was sweet. He liked her a lot, actually, they’d hit it off during the relay race earlier when they were both on the egg-on-a-spoon leg together. He was pleasantly surprised to find that she was not only Stevie’s roommate, but that the girls actually shared the room directly across the hall from himself and David. But again, he didn’t find himself wondering about her in any sort of romantic or sexual way. Which was sort of weird.
Patrick knew that this was the part of co-ed dorm living most guys his age were looking forward to the most. His friends had gone on and on for months about how they couldn’t wait to be unsupervised, sleeping on the same floor as girls, and how excited they were about the unlimited hookup possibilities that offered.

Patrick had expected to feel some sort of excitement about that, too, but he was a little puzzled that finding out that two hot girls would be sleeping across the hall wasn’t doing much for him. He was more excited about his first night with David, actually, if he was being really honest. Maybe it was just because he already knew he wanted to be friends with Stevie and Twyla, and he didn’t want to ruin that? That explanation felt weak even to himself, as he thought about it, but he didn’t want to ruin the high he was on.

He’d had a blast, this afternoon. They’d done relay races, learned and sang school and college songs, had a human pyramid competition, and more. Even the information seminars had been fun, learning about the school, his college and dorm, what to expect. He felt drunk on the feeling of newness. He’d been craving change for so long he almost didn’t know what to do with himself. And everything seemed to be going so well.

He’d met new friends already, including his roommate David, which was a real relief. He’d hoped so much that he and whoever he got roomed with would become close, and he already knew that would be the case between himself and David. In fact, they already seemed close, which was totally weird. Same with Stevie and Twyla. It felt like they’d known each other a long time, not just a matter of hours. They’d just bonded and clicked in a way that felt very summer camp to Patrick. It made him smile.

And all around him, he saw other people doing the same. Friendships were being forged everywhere, and people seemed to accept the total strangers around them as their new family almost immediately. There was an incredible sense of camaraderie all around him, and it intoxicated Patrick. He’d felt so stale, so stagnant for so long. And suddenly the world felt bright, and fun, and exciting again.

And David was at his side. Patrick was acutely aware of his proximity. They were all covered in mud, and were laughing as they returned from the final activity, which included a flooded mud pit, a pole, and a stuffed frog. Patrick’s arms were casually thrown over David’s and Stevie’s shoulders, and he was laughing with them as Stevie told them all about one of her failed attempts to grab the frog.

“So you just climbed him like a tree?” David asked, and Patrick tried not to stare over at him as they all walked arm in arm.
“Pretty much. He was tall.” She agreed, and Twyla laughed.

“And hot.” She added, and David nodded. Patrick felt his face go a little hot as he felt himself internally agree. That guy had definitely been hot.

“So fucking hot.” David agreed, and then leaned forward to look around Patrick at Stevie. His arm gripped at Patrick’s waist as he did, and Patrick felt himself flush, and want to pull David closer in response. “What was his body like, could you tell?” He asked, and Patrick felt a surge of jealousy flash through him that caught him off guard. It didn’t make any sense, so he told himself it was just that he’d always tended to run a little soft, and had always admired and been envious of guys with good bodies.

“Let’s just say he works out.” Stevie replied, and Twyla squealed a little, and David laughed, and Patrick tried to laugh along. He was still reeling from that flare of jealousy, not knowing where it came from. It wasn’t like him. But then again, none of today was anything like he was used to. Maybe it made sense that he would be changing too.

Twyla was walking a few steps in front of them, and she pushed open one of the swinging galley bathroom doors for them all to pass through. It was the second one they’d passed, because they’d entered at the very far end of the building, closer to where the mud pit had been set up. “Damn it!” David said, as he jiggled the last shower doorknob before they were through and out the other side.

All of the shower rooms were occupied, and people were milling around and waiting. Some were in bathrobes, or still clad in mud covered clothing but holding shower caddies full of soap and shampoo etc. There was one girl who was apparently completely naked, except for a tightly wrapped towel tucked in over her breasts and falling only to her upper thighs, and a guy who was shirtless, covered only by the towel he had tied around his waist.

Both seemed completely unbothered by their public displays of nudity, and Patrick was getting the sense that that was going to be the vibe around here. People seemed to be…freer than back home, in high school. Maybe it was the absence of parents, and people were just going wild. But it was an entirely new world, for Patrick.

He felt himself flush again, as he tried not to stare at the guy’s body. This guy ‘clearly worked out’ as well, but Patrick was trying not to notice. He didn’t even realize he wasn’t even checking out the girl until it was too late and they were already past. “Damn it! We were too slow.” David whined, and held out his hands in front of him to sneer with distaste at the mud that covered his arms. “There is a seriously low shower stall to student ratio, I’m thinking about writing the dean.” David added, and Patrick laughed.
“Yeah, that seems like a good idea, tell me how it goes.” Stevie replied dryly, and Patrick chuckled.

“Ask him to build us an en-suite while you’re at it.” Patrick added, and David turned to scowl now at him, and Patrick’s smile widened. He liked when David scowled at him. He liked David.

He’d gotten to know him a little bit better over the course of the day. They’d been in two groups together, and one information seminar. In all the groups they’d been in together, Patrick had found that he’d lost the interest to mingle and meet other people. He was just desperate for more time to keep talking to his roommate. He stuck to David’s side like glue, and he hoped it wasn’t annoying. But David didn’t seem to mind. In fact, he seemed a little lost, very out of his element. So Patrick got the impression that he had appreciated his company.

They’d seemed to bond almost instantly. Patrick could tell they were going to be best friends already, and he couldn’t believe how lucky he was to have been matched with him. David was everything the guys in his town weren’t. He was dramatic, he was artistic, he was worldly, he was prissy. He made Patrick laugh, even when he wasn’t trying to be funny. He was terrified of bugs, which Patrick had found hilarious. A ladybug had landed on his sleeve, and David had almost had a meltdown, until Patrick had grabbed his wrist and held it tight, pulling it closer to his face so he could blow the tiny spotted beetle away.

“They’re lucky, you’re supposed to make a wish.” He’d said, after he’d done it, still leaning in and looking up at David, and shot him a smile. David’s face had transformed from a look of terror to a soft smile in return, and Patrick had felt a flush of excitement. Or something. He didn’t say anything (partly because it would kill the luck), but Patrick had wished that he and David would become close. He already knew that he wanted to. He just hoped that David felt the same way. He wanted David to like him. He wanted this to be the best year of his life. Their lives.

Patrick was jumping the gun, he knew that. But sometimes you couldn’t help it when you clicked with someone. And it was easier to click, when everyone around you was starting fresh, too, and looking for people to click with. The same had happened with Stevie and Twyla, they’d just fallen into place with them, and suddenly it was like they had a little friend group. Patrick had a group, and it wasn’t full of sports-bros. It had girls (who weren’t Rachel), and David (who Patrick was excited to find out wasn’t entirely straight), and everything was just exactly as he’d hoped it would be. It was like he was living in a dream. He was sure the bubble would burst, when things settled down and classes began. But for now, it was a whole new world and he was loving every second of it.

“Okay, you can joke, but you’re the one who is going to have to share a room with me all disgusting and covered in mud.” David said, and Patrick laughed, pulling out his key. They’d
arrived at their room. A few feet down and on the other side, Twyla was opening the door to hers and Stevie’s room.

“I somehow think I’ll survive.” Patrick replied dryly, and David shot him a petulant look, but the effect was ruined by the smile he could see twisting to the side of his face, despite his best efforts to hold it back. As he admired David’s smile, Patrick noticed a speckle of mud on his cheek, and had to physically restrain himself from leaning in and wiping it off with his thumb. Because that would be weird.

“Yes, but I’ll also be cranky because I’m all disgusting and covered in mud, and I can promise that won’t be pleasant for either of us.” David countered, his eyebrows shooting up, and Patrick laughed and pushed the door open to their room after feeling the lock click over.

“If you guys go anywhere, come get us first!” Twyla said, before heading into her own room.

“I heard there’s going to be a floor party. Pre-drinks in your room?” Stevie asked, pausing at her door. Patrick smiled, and looked at David, who nodded.

“After I shower, and fix my hair. Which could take a while.” David agreed, and Patrick chuckled once, to himself. David wasn’t joking, and yet Patrick found him endlessly entertaining.

“God forbid your hair not be perfect.” He said, wanting to tease David a little more, and was rewarded with a scandalized look from his roommate.

“I think I’ve been extremely flexible and accommodating today, don’t you, Patrick?” David asked, gesturing wildly to his messy, mud speckled hair. “Have you seen the current state of my head?” He asked, his voice rising dramatically, and Patrick laughed.

“You know, I didn’t think you’d take a run at the frog.” Patrick said in reply, thinking fondly back to David’s (somewhat disastrous) attempt to reach the frog at the top of the pole in the center of the mud pit. Patrick had gone to help him, assisting to hoist him up, though the mud had proven too slippery, and David had fallen backwards and splashed into it pretty spectacularly. Patrick had felt awful for a second, when he’d thought David might be mad, but he’d found his regard for his new roommate rose significantly when he’d risen, still in good humour, despite being covered in mud.

“Yeah, well, I’ve done Coachella two summers in a row, I’ve been muddy before. Besides, when in Rome, and all that…” David replied, biting back a smile. “And to be fair, I was already filthy
from people splashing me, I had nothing to lose.” He added, as they entered their room together. David closed the door behind them, and suddenly, it was just the two of them.

“Well, you don’t always want to do as the Romans did. That could get you into a lot of trouble.” Patrick joked, suddenly incredibly aware of how alone they were, and how desperate he was to say something cool or funny, but how awkward it had suddenly become. He felt himself blush, embarrassed that he may have just said something stupid, but David just looked at him, and smiled this little smile, and his eyes sparkled.

“We’ll see if you still feel that way at our first toga party.” He replied, and Patrick huffed a laugh and shrugged, and couldn’t help the image that flashed in his mind of David’s bare chest and shoulder exposed, a white sheet tied over the other. As was his usual habit, he had already began packing that thought up in a box and tucking it away, never to be thought of again, when David suddenly pulled Patrick’s (now very dirty) t-shirt up and over his head. And suddenly Patrick had a whole other thought to pack away, if it was even possible.

He’d begun by crossing his arms and grabbing the lower hem, and he’d pulled it up and over his head, exposing his very toned and lightly tanned stomach and chest. There had been a short instant where the shirt was covering David’s face but had yet to be pulled over his head, and Patrick found that he could look without being caught. And he couldn’t help himself, he found himself drinking the sight in. It was like his eyes wanted to memorize the sight of his body, before David could see again, could see him looking.

Why did Patrick want to look so much?

“Ugh, the mud is drying and it’s getting dust everywhere. Don’t sit on anything!” David said, shaking Patrick out of his own thoughts. He looked up at his raven-haired roommate, and almost laughed at the comically-disgusted look on his face as he held out the dirty t-shirt in front of him. “I don’t even want this in my laundry basket.” He said, but then deposited it in the bottom of the empty basket anyways.

Patrick’s brain still seemed to be buffering, though he eventually caught up to speed and found he was able to think again a moment later. “We should probably line up for the showers, if we want to have one any time in the next hour.” He said, because it was the first thing he could think of, and David nodded vehemently.

“Put all your clothes in my basket, I’ll do a load tomorrow.” David said, and Patrick felt a little taken aback at how domestic that felt. And also at how forward. Was it because they’d passed naked people in towels in the hall, that David thought Patrick would be comfortable with that too? Patrick hadn’t really planned on being a “wear a towel to the public shower” type person, but he
also kind of felt excited about the idea of undressing around David.

Okay, what the *hell* was going on?

Patrick reached back and grabbed the neck and shoulders of his shirt, and tugged it up and over his head. When he looked up again, his shirt now in his hands rather than on his body, he found David looking at him, and smirking just a little. “Do you work out?” He asked, and by the way his eyes widened a little immediately after saying it, Patrick got the impression he hadn’t meant to say it. And for some reason, that made him blush, and a flush of warmth flowed through him.

“No as much as I should.” Patrick replied, being a little modest. He’d averaged an hour of hard cardio a day for the last two years. Ever since things had started to feel wrong with Rachel. It helped center him. He’d started weight training the year prior, and had steadily been pushing his limits. He knew he looked probably the best he ever had, and it wasn’t entirely by accident. He’d known he was moving into a dorm. Was it so bad that he wanted to look his best? Judging by David’s body, he may have been guilty of the same thing.

Not that he was looking at David’s body. (Except, he totally was.)

“Maybe we can go to the gym together.” David suggested, and Patrick smiled. He liked that idea. Perhaps more than he was expecting to.

“Yeah, for sure.” Patrick said, a little dumbly, very aware of the fact that they were both standing around and chatting casually with their shirts off.

“I mostly use the elliptical, but sometimes I like to lift weights, and it would be good to have a spotter.” David added, and all Patrick could think was that he would spot for David any day. He swallowed, and his eyes trailed down David’s body. The dried spots of mud he saw there reminded him they should be hurrying to the showers.

“Let’s get going.” He said, because he thought if he didn’t he might combust, and right then, all Patrick wanted was a cold shower. He turned to his hockey bag that still rested where he’d left it on his bed, and dug around for a towel. When he found one, he pulled it out and turned back to find David taking one carefully folded towel out of a drawer. He had fully unpacked, and was obviously meticulous in his organization.

“So how do you want to handle the whole changing situation?” David asked, gesturing down to his
pants with his head while simultaneously holding out the towel as if in explanation. “Because cards on the table, I’ve just spent half the summer visiting nude beaches in Europe. I’m in a good place with my body right now, but I don’t want to make you, like, uncomfortable, or anything.” He said, and Patrick had to laugh. There was something earnest in David’s explanation, like he really didn’t want to upset Patrick. And the way his expressions twisted on his face, leaving him with a scowl as he finished speaking as if he was bracing for a negative reaction, was just so damn endearing.

Patrick shrugged, trying to act cool. But his heart was racing. “I don’t care.” He said, in what he thought was a nonchalant manner.

“’Kay, well, let’s just turn around then? If you want to peek, that’s on you.” David replied with a wink, and Patrick laughed.

“I’m not going to peek, David.”

“Yeah, we’ll see.” David replied with a smirk, and Patrick felt himself blush, which was probably completely obvious with his shirt off and pale skin on display. For a second, Patrick wondered if David might be lightly flirting, and if he was hoping he was, it was probably only because it would be flattering. But more likely, David was teasing Patrick, not unlike Patrick had been doing to him all day long.

It was fair play. Patrick tried to hold back his smile and felt his dimples pop.

“You won’t me see, though. If I peek, you’re not going to have any idea it happened.” Patrick replied, teasing David right back. Not flirting. Teasing.

“Mmhmm, well, just if you plan to do any peeking, do it soon, before I gain my freshman fifteen.” David replied, gesturing to his (currently very toned) midsection with his free hand and grimacing. Patrick huffed a laugh.

“You’re not going to be gaining a freshman fifteen and neither am I. We’re gonna be gym buddies, remember?” Patrick felt the hopeful, dopey smile on his face and couldn’t do anything about it. Thankfully, David smiled in return, although he reined it in quickly and it twisted to the side.

“Oh, we’re not doing buddies.” He replied, and without waiting for a response, turned around and started undoing his tight, mud-covered jeans. Patrick felt himself watch, for a second, before he realized what he was doing and he turned around to face his own bed and worked at undoing his
shorts. Taking a deep breath, trusting that David wasn’t looking, he shoved them and his boxers all the way down and kicked them to the side. Then he quickly grabbed his towel and tied it around his waist.

“You decent?” He asked, though he still heard David struggling. Probably with those skin-tight jeans. They couldn’t be easy to take off. Patrick found himself picturing it, before he realized, and packed that thought nicely away in a box.

“Yeah.” David replied, finally, and Patrick turned around. David had an enormous fluffy white towel tied around his waist, a bathrobe thrown over one arm, and he carried a little shower caddy with various hair and body products. Patrick shot him a smirk.

“If you have a bathrobe, why wear your towel to the shower? You want to show off that body ‘you’re in a good place with’ to the neighbours?” Patrick asked, although he wasn’t really complaining. And he wasn’t blaming David for wanting to show off, if that’s what it was, either. Because he looked good.

David looked at him like he was crazy. “Patrick, I’m filthy. This bathrobe is clean. Ergo--”


“I hope you brought shower sandals. I’ve heard some horror stories about fungus…” David replied, and Patrick was actually glad he’d reminded him. He turned to dig in his bag once more, and came out with a rubber pair of Adidas slip-ons a second later.

Just under an hour later, David returned from the shower. He and Patrick had been in line for about half an hour, and had entered separate shower rooms at around the same time, but his new roommate seemed to be a lot lower maintenance than he was, and had finished much quicker. David hadn’t been that filthy since it had rained at Coachella and he’d been a little too high on Ecstacy for his own good.

Okay, maybe he wasn’t that filthy. David remembered finding mud in some very uncomfortable places, after that night. At least today there were still some parts of him that hadn’t been saturated in filth. But still, a thorough full body scrub and hair routine was in order after the events of this
David didn’t really know why his stomach started flipping as he approached his dorm room door. He was already feeling comfortable with Patrick, and couldn’t believe how much he liked him, how well they seemed to get along. Despite the constant ball-busting, of which Patrick seemed to be addicted. Normally David wouldn’t take it, but for some reason, he didn’t mind being teased by Patrick. Or even Stevie for that matter. But he drew the line at Twyla. If she started roasting him at every chance as well, all hope was lost for him.

The real issue with the fluttery stomach was that David was already developing a little crush on his new roommate. One he felt pretty shitty about, but couldn’t change. Patrick was, as David’s sister Alexis might say, an adorable button face. And that button face came with a nice body, and a sweet and endearing personality. But David had it under control. This was just day one, the crush would run its course. Patrick was straight, there was nothing to be done about it anyways. David would get over it. He’d had crushes on straight guys before, this was nothing new.

And so, taking a deep breath, David opened the door to his room. Patrick had music playing, some bluesy indie rock band David had never heard of before. It wasn’t bad. It wasn’t good, but it wasn’t bad. It could be worse. Patrick was wearing a new pair of jeans and a new, clean, very soft looking blue t-shirt. He had been folding his clothes and placing them into the built-in drawers of his side of the wall unit, and looked up as David came in.

“You’re wearing the bathrobe.” He said, and David took a slight pause to process that before replying.

“Yes, well, I’m clean now.”

“Looks soft.” Patrick replied, and David eyed him.

“It’s very soft, thank you.” He knew he liked Patrick, but David still didn’t know fully what to make of him. He kept saying things that David didn’t expect him to say, catching him off guard. David couldn’t get a really good read on what Patrick’s whole vibe was, although he already knew he trusted him. And David didn’t trust easily. Although, what choice did he have, really? He shared a room with the guy. He could murder him in his sleep, if he wanted to. So there had to be some level of trust apparent from the beginning.

David didn’t know what to make of Patrick. But he did know he was cute. Damn was he cute. And he was that rare combination of sexy and cute, so he was definitely good looking, but not the kind
of looks that make someone grow up to be a conceited asshole. In fact, David got the impression that Patrick had no idea how attractive he was. It was such a shame he was almost certainly straight. Although, David wasn’t sure that dating your roommate would be the smartest idea, even if he wasn’t. He sighed at the thought.

“I’ve just got to do my hair and post-shower skincare routine and then we can go pre-drink with Stevie and Twyla before the party.” He said, because Patrick hadn’t replied. He’d just sort of stood there, looking at him, and David had to say something.

“How long does your hair and post-shower skincare routine take?” Patrick asked, raising one eyebrow and smirking a little now.

“Up to and perhaps exceeding an hour, depending on how my hair decides to behave that day.”

Patrick smiled, and turned to a shelf behind his bed that appeared to have been set up as a makeshift bar some time since Patrick had returned to the room. He grabbed two glasses, and a full bottle of Crown Royal, then turned back to David and walked over to their long shared desk. “That’s too long. Let’s start pre-pre-drinking.” He poured the amber liquor into each glass, about two fingers each.

“I’m normally a sugary vodka cocktail kind of guy.” David said, but he was already reaching for his glass. He smiled at Patrick, and held it forward. “Cheers to us.”

“To a great year.” Patrick added, as he clinked his glass against David’s. They both took a sip, and Patrick noticed the way David winced “Do you need a chaser or something to mix that with? The mini-fridge is still cooling down, so I’m pretty sure the pop is still warm, and there’s no ice, but I could--”

“No. No I’m fine. I just usually drink things that are much sweeter than this. But I can swallow just about anything, so…” David stopped. His eyes widened in horror, and he couldn’t stop them from darting to Patrick’s face. He looked amused, his eyes alight with mischievous humour. "And that is a thing I just… said to you.”

Patrick just smiled at David, although it was more of a smirk. Why was he so smirky? “I’m going to unpack. Get to work on your hair. I’d hate for it to be messy, or--”

“No. No I’m fine. I just usually drink things that are much sweeter than this. But I can swallow just about anything, so…” David stopped. His eyes widened in horror, and he couldn’t stop them from darting to Patrick’s face. He looked amused, his eyes alight with mischievous humour. "And that is a thing I just… said to you.”

Patrick just smiled at David, although it was more of a smirk. Why was he so smirky? “I’m going to unpack. Get to work on your hair. I’d hate for it to be messy, or--”

“Or worse, flat.” David cut in.
“God forbid.”

“Fine.” David replied, and paused, regarding Patrick critically. “I normally wouldn’t let anyone witness this. But seeing as though we are basically living on top of each other, I suppose I have no other recourse.” That smirk returned to Patrick’s face. And suddenly David wanted to kiss it off of him. Uh oh. Was that the whisky, already?

“I promise I won’t share any of your secrets with anyone.” Patrick’s smile turned conspiratorial, and he held out his pinky finger to David.

“It’s less about secrecy, and more about dignity.” David said with a grimace, but hooked his pinky with Patrick’s and shook slightly. Their fingers lingered, entwined, for just a second too long. David realized too late, and pulled away with a start which he tried to cover by clearing his throat. *Smooth, David.*

“I’m going to unpack.” Patrick said, his expression a little awkward, and David just nodded enthusiastically.

“Uh-huh, yep.” David wished there was somewhere in this tiny room he could go hide and possibly keel over and die of embarrassment. But there was nowhere to hide. So David took another sip of the rye Patrick had so generously poured for him, and went to his closet to retrieve his lighted stand mirror.

“You guys are the cutest roommates! Give them the award! Sorry, Ted and Miguel.” The girl (David couldn’t remember her name) cooed. She was drunk, like every single other person on the floor. And just like everyone else, she was having a great time.

“You hear that, Ted? We’re cuter than you.” Patrick taunted from beside him. His arm was draped casually around David’s shoulders, pulling him into his side in an easy display of comfort and familiarity that both jarred and intoxicated David. He and Patrick had definitely bonded that day, and especially that night, since the alcohol had started to break down the boundaries and awkwardness between them. It felt new, it felt weird, it felt right.
In fact, it felt so right that David had to keep reminding himself that Patrick was just an extremely self assured straight guy who was just comfortable with his sexuality, and not potential boyfriend material. And David could handle that, he thought. He hoped. He was going to have to. It’s not like he had a choice in the matter, anyway.

But despite the platonic boundaries of their relationship, and despite not wanting David sexually, David enjoyed the way that Patrick almost seemed possessive over him. He was constantly touching him, or coming over and putting his arm around him if David began talking to someone new. Already. It was a roommate thing, David was sure. He was seeing shades of it all around them, in the rooms they stopped in and out of. People acting like they’d known each other their whole lives. Casual touches. Rampant camaraderie. And the roommate pairs were always together.

They quickly became known almost as units. The majority of the building was single rooms, so they were almost special, in a way. He’d heard a few people already complain they didn’t have one, that they were jealous of the “instant best friend”. It also didn’t hurt that the double rooms were larger in proportion to the singles, so they made better hang-out or party spaces. The roommate pairings were getting a lot of social cache tonight, on one of the most important nights of the year.

David had noticed to his surprise that he and Patrick seemed to be pretty popular. People seemed to be drawn to them, and they’d been meeting a lot of new friends together. In fact, it was almost difficult to get any time alone with Patrick at all. Although they’d both managed to stick behind and chat alone in the cool night time air after they’d gone outside to smoke a joint with Stevie and Twyla and a few others.

David had learned about Patrick’s family, in that discussion. And some other, very random and weird things about Patrick as well. Weed would do that to a conversation. But David had learned that Patrick had some very specific feelings about the Christopher Nolan Batman films, that he believed that no matter what the scientists said Pluto was most definitely still a planet, and that he was philosophically opposed to cauliflower. Just… in general. Cauliflower. The vegetable.

David could have listened to him talk all day. He could see himself falling for this guy, if he wasn’t careful. He had to be careful. That would be a terrible, horrible idea. Falling for straight guys was nothing new for David, though it always ended in disaster and heartbreak. Falling for a straight guy he was stuck sharing a single room with for the next year? That was some next level terrible idea shit right there. No. Nuh-uh. Not gonna happen.

But damn was it hard not to picture it, just a little bit. Because there was something between them. A spark. A friendship spark, he supposed. Although he didn’t think that that was really a thing. But it had to be a thing, because he was experiencing it right now. He and Patrick had just clicked, and
as the drinks flowed, Patrick had begun to be quite—free—with his affections. His totally platonic affections.

David had seen this before. Straight guys that were so totally sure of themselves, guys that weren’t homophobic and maybe wanted to prove it, and they crossed boundaries they didn’t realize they were crossing. They doted hugs and cuddles freely upon their gay friends. They flirted openly, because it seemed fun and harmless to them. They weren’t threatened, they thought it was all in good fun. And it was. As long as the person you were hanging all over wasn’t hopelessly in love with you. It really sucked to be the GBFF of a hot guy that you loved, that loved to cuddle but never kiss. David had been there. He knew the signs. He should have stopped this from happening.

And yet, here he was. Cuddled into Patrick’s side, sipping his fifth or tenth or fifteenth drink (he seriously had no clue at that point), and laughing along to some story Twyla was telling about her cousins and her getting drunk and stealing lawn gnomes, back in Schitt’s Creek. And yes, that was a real place. David had made her repeat the name, and clarify that it was real, several times before he’d believed her. Actually, he’d never believed her. He had to pull out his phone to Google it, and it had turned out she was right. Schitt’s fucking Creek. David never would have had a conversation like this at NYU.

And yet he was? Somehow okay with that? He was happy. He was content. Patrick had loved being called cute by the drunk girl, which made David happy. And Stevie was funny and pretty, and Twyla was kind of adorable and occasionally hilarious, although always unintentionally. David was drunk. He was drunk and happy.

Happy.

Whoa.

Literally that same calendar day, earlier in the morning, he had been resigned to hating this place, but nonetheless persevering. He thought he was going to ride out the year in misery, putting in his time until he could convince his Dad to send him to New York. That same fucking day. He’d been so damn sure he was going to hate this place, and have no friends, and he’d really just been thinking about it as a sort of purgatory. A punishment for his sins. David was drunk, and the thought sort of rocked him.

Patrick must have felt some change in his body language, because he tilted his head down to whisper in his ear. “You okay?”
David looked up, and Patrick’s face was right there. He wore a soft smile and open, caring eyes that were a little wasted-looking at the moment. David sort of melted when their eyes met, and he smiled and nodded. “Mmhmm. All good. Really good, actually. I’m having fun.”

“I’m having fun too.” Patrick replied, and David could feel his words vibrate against his body as well as hear them, although they were quiet enough that no one else could hear.

“I’m having even more fun knowing this party is happening at the other end of the hallway.” David added, and Patrick chuckled. Their room was almost at the farthest end of the building from the parking lot, and the party had sort of naturally clustered at the other end. Their room remained untouched, and available to retreat to, which David was very happy about indeed.

“I’m getting the impression that you’re a bit of a clean freak.” Patrick replied.

“I promise I’m not that bad.” David said, lying. He was that bad. He just wanted to ease Patrick into it. He had some very specific rules and protocols around sharing a room that he planned to enforce. Regardless of how much he liked Patrick, he was going to have to learn to get on board with David’s room rules. But he didn’t want to scare him too much just yet.

“Don’t worry.” Patrick replied. “I’m not dirty.” He added, before his eyes went wide and he seemed to process what he’d just (drunkenly) said. He went even redder than he already was, all flushed with drink, and David snorted a laugh. He had heard the words, he’d processed that they could have been taken in a sexual way, and was going to let it pass. But then Patrick had gone all deer-in-headlights on him and it was just too funny. And David was drunk. He couldn’t help but laugh.

“You know what I mean.” Patrick said, clearly embarrassed and adorably bashful. “I’m going to go to the bathroom. Do you want to come?” He added. And… had Patrick just invited David to the bathroom with him? What the fuck did that mean? Did he mean it in a girlfriends-always-go-to-the-bathroom-together sort of social way, or did he mean it in the way that many people in David’s past had meant it? It could have been a completely innocent invitation, or it could have been an invitation to sneak into a stall and have a quickie.

David didn’t think it was that. It couldn’t be that. But he still sort of panicked, and shook his head. “No, you go.” He said, and Patrick squeezed his shoulder once before getting up off the bed they’d been sitting on and heading off towards the door. David watched him go, a little wistfully, and continued to look off towards the door until Stevie plunked down next to him, where Patrick had been sitting.
“Having fun?” She asked, and then pulled her legs up to sit cross-legged, facing David. There was a slightly maniacal edge to her smile that David loved. Stevie was funny, and pretty, and she was totally crazy. She was David’s kind of people.

“Yes, against my better judgement. I am. Having fun that is.”

“That’s good. Alcohol will do that.”

“Well, I’m barely even drunk, so.” David lied, and Stevie laughed.

“Okay, then how many fingers m’I holding up?” She asked, waving her hands in front of him, changing the number of fingers she extended randomly as she did.

“Shut up. You’re drunk too.” He said, and she gave him a ‘no duh’ face in reply.

“So you guys are cute.” She said after a moment, and leaned forward to nudge him. David felt his cheeks go hot and he bit his lips between his teeth and scrunched his eyes closed to center himself.

“It’s not like that, he’s straight.” David replied, and Stevie nodded noncommittally.

“So, there’s nothing going on there? It looked like there was something going on there.”

“No, just a very cute, very affectionate straight boy.” David sighed.

“And you’re… gay?” She asked, a little forwardly, but they’d bonded. David already felt like Stevie was going to be a very close friend. He wasn’t offended by her question. Also, he was drunk. He shook his head a little loosely.

“Mm, no. I’m pan, actually?” He replied.

“As in, Peter?” She asked, and David’s face twisted incredulously.
“What? No. No--”

“David, I’m fucking with you. I know what pan is. I haven’t been living under a rock. I’m bi.” She cut in, and David rolled his eyes and smiled.

“You’re an asshole.”

“Yeah, it’s kind of my thing.” She shrugged.

“Same.”

They regarded each other, and smiled. There was a spark there. Although this time, David was almost certain that it was a friendship spark. That must be a thing, after all.

“So you like girls too.” Stevie said, a moment later.

“Yeah, that was sort of implied in the whole pan thing.” David replied dryly. Then Stevie got that mad glint in her eye again, the one she got when she was being mischievous. Which was often. She loved egging people on, encouraging them to do bad things. She thought it was hilarious. She was a bit of an anarchist, he thought. And he liked it. Stevie was hot. If David hadn’t been sure that the spark was a friendship spark, he could totally have been into her.

“Cool.” She said, nodding. “So do you wanna make out?” She asked casually, lifting her drink to her mouth and draining the rest of the potent liquid in one go. When she put the cup down, she looked at him expectantly. But David was drunk, he needed a second. Had she just asked if he wanted to make out with her?

“Um, I dunno if-- if I heard you right. Heh, it’s so loud. Did you--”

“Ask if you wanted to make out? Yeah. I did.”
“Oh, okay, umm.” David honestly had no idea what to make of that proposal. He could barely think straight, through the alcohol haze. But when it would clear, all he could think was ‘that would ruin my chances with Patrick’. Even though that was stupid. Patrick didn’t want David. He was straight. And yet David didn’t want Patrick to see him making out with anyone else.

“Don’t get the wrong idea. It’s not that deep. I like to make out when I’m wasted. And I’m super wasted.” She replied, her words slurring a little, and then she cracked a hysterical laugh, before leaning forward and nudging David. He didn’t know what she was laughing about, but seeing her like that made him laugh.

“Oh, okay. Well then I’ll pass for now.” David replied, and Stevie laughed again.

“No problem. I’ve already made out with two people anyways.”

“Okay, eww.”

“And you’re my friend, but you’re also, like, pretty hot. And you look like you’d be a good kisser.” She pressed on, as if he hadn’t said anything.

“I look like I’d be a good kisser?”

Stevie just shrugged, and David laughed. He was going to reply, but then he saw Patrick returning. They caught eyes for a second, and David felt his whole body react. A flash of excitement and warmth that washed over him. But then Patrick was intercepted, by a very hot (although basic) and very drunk girl. Very drunk. David thought her name was Steph, but he wasn’t totally sure.

What he was sure of, was that he was ashamed of the flare of jealousy he was experiencing. He was being drunk and dramatic. Patrick was his roommate. He was straight. And what’s more, they had only known each other one day. David was nothing to Patrick. Patrick should be nothing to him, too. They’d only just met. And yet he felt like more. He already felt like he was David’s other half. Or that he was supposed to be. But that was the craziest fucking thing. David was drunk. He was drunk and stupid.

The girl was all over Patrick. She wanted to fuck him. David knew it. Of course she did, why wouldn’t she? Patrick was hot. David didn’t want Patrick to fuck the drunk girl.
He took the hand she’d laid on him and gently removed it. That made David feel good. But then the girl hugged him, and lost her balance and Patrick had caught her. His strong arms holding her up. He laughed and smiled down at her before leaning in and whispering in her ear, the smile not leaving his lips. David wanted to tear them apart. Patrick’s eyes roamed the room as he whispered, and they landed on David watching him. But David didn’t linger to see his reaction, he’d averted his in a shock of embarrassment, and looked back to Stevie, who had just leaned forward to snag someone’s mostly-full cup off of a desk.

She sat back down, drink in hand, and drank it triumphantly.

“Ugh, you’re disgusting,” David said, and she just shrugged and took another sip.

David watched Patrick leave with the girl out of the corner of his eye. He was trying to avoid being caught watching again, but couldn’t help himself. Patrick had his arm around her, holding her up. Right as they were walking through the door and out into the hall, David saw her hand drop down and squeeze his ass, and Patrick jump a little. And God was David jealous. He wanted to squeeze that ass! He’d been thinking about it all night.

David waited anxiously for Patrick to return. When he wasn’t back 10 minutes later, he expected the worst. Patrick and the girl had hooked up. She was hot, he was hot, they were both drunk and both straight. It wasn’t that hard to figure out. He shouldn’t be so miserable about it, but he was. It was like the entire party was raging around him, people having a great time, but a little black personal rain cloud had formed right above David Rose. And the drops that fell from it were as cold as ice.

He leaned forward and nudged Stevie.

“Do you still want to make out?”

Patrick was extremely frustrated. Why did he always end up the babysitter at parties like this? Somehow, he always got stuck taking care of some drunk, and missing out on all the fun. All he could think as he basically carried Sarah down the hallway towards what he hoped was her room,
was the look on David’s face when he’d caught Patrick whispering in her ear. It was like it was branded behind his eyelids, and he didn’t know why.

He’d told her it was time to go, that he’d take her back to her room. She was dangerously drunk, she needed a glass of water and to sleep it off, and it didn’t seem like anyone else was going to step in and take care of her. Everyone was too drunk themselves. Hell, Patrick was too drunk to be dealing with this shit, and yet here he was. Holding her hair back as she puked into the toilet. It was disgusting.

Eventually, he’d gotten her to the right room. She’d pointed him in the entirely wrong direction, and he’d gotten her to the very end of the hall reading signs, looking for her name and not finding it, before having to head all the way back. She was basically limp by the time he got her into bed, on her side in prone position in case she threw up again. He’d gotten her to take a few sips of water, but he’d given up after a while.

Finally feeling like he’d done everything he could to help her, Patrick had walked back down the hall towards the party. He stopped in one of the galley bathrooms and stepped into a sink room to wash his hands and splash some water on his face. His eyes were bloodshot, and his reflection in the mirror swam a little as he regarded himself. He was still drunk. Even after all that. And yet, he felt like he could really use another drink. Especially after all that.

He thought of David. He wanted to find him. David was great. Patrick was the luckiest guy in the world, getting paired with him. He’d met most of the other double room guys, and there wasn’t a single one he’d have preferred. Even Ted, who was really nice and pretty hot.

Patrick was too drunk to even register that he’d just thought of Ted’s looks. Or to register how much his mind seemed to be fixating on David’s looks. He kept picturing him. He kept thinking of little things they’d done together over the course of the day and night. Focusing on the way he’d felt tucked under Patrick’s arm. And he tried to hold onto those memories, live in them, recreate them.

And none of that felt weird to him, because Patrick was drunk. He left the bathroom and went to find David.

And he found him. And Holy Fuck he wished he hadn’t of found him.

David was with Stevie. And they were making out. Sitting next to each other, in the very place that Patrick had left them. Right in the middle of the party, they were making out. David’s fingers were
laced into Stevie’s long dark hair, holding her head in place, and his other hand was on her shoulder. Stevie’s hands wrapped around David’s back, holding him in place as she sloppily devoured him. It was *not* a sexy kiss. They were both clearly very drunk. It was sloppy, and gross.

Patrick told himself that was why he hated it so much. Why it made him feel like he might have to run to the bathroom to be sick. Suddenly, Patrick felt ten times dizzier than he had a moment earlier, and he no longer thought he wanted another drink.

He didn’t know how long he stood there, watching, but eventually he found himself rushing down the hall towards his room.

No. Not *his* room. His and David’s room. David.

Why the hell was Patrick so bothered by this!? Was he jealous about Stevie? Did Patrick want to be with Stevie, and he was jealous that David had gotten to her first? He *had* noticed how pretty she was, earlier in the day. That had to be it.

That wasn’t it.

It wasn’t it and Patrick knew it. But he didn’t know what *it* was. Why he should be so bothered. It felt more like it was about David, than Stevie, actually. Patrick felt mad at him, he thought. He was mad he hadn’t waited for him. Patrick had been stuck taking care of some gross drunk girl, and David had just moved right on without him and found someone else.

Patrick was mad that David had found someone else.

But he was too drunk to understand what that meant. So he flopped onto his bed, and fumed. About what? He still wasn’t sure.

A while later, Patrick was sitting on his bed, watching some Netflix on his lap top and trying to calm down, when he heard the door slowly open. David crept in sheepishly, and looked awkwardly towards him, and Patrick felt his head begin to swim as he tried to figure out what to say. He wasn’t as drunk as before, but he was still pretty wasted. You couldn’t drink as much as he’d drank that night and sober up completely in an hour.
Because of that fact, there was no sober quality-assurance check process for the words that came out of his mouth. He was normally very careful about what he said. But right now, without thinking, he blurted, “I saw you hooking up with Stevie.”

He couldn’t believe he’d said it when the words were out, and he felt them hang between them as he waited for a response. David had a bit of a deer-in-headlights look about him, before his face twisted defensively and he patted the air in front of him in with his hands, gesticulating to emphasize his response.

“Okay, we were not “hooking up”? We were making out, yes. But not “hooking up”.” He used air quotes around the words hooking up.

Patrick rolled his eyes. He didn’t know why, but he was still mad at David. It made no sense. But there it was. “Is there really a difference?” He asked dryly.

“Actually, yes. The distinction is significant. Besides, why do you care? Weren’t you hooking up with that drunk girl? I saw you take her back to her room, and then you didn’t come back.” There was something about the tone to his voice that drained all the anger out of Patrick. Well, anger at David. Because suddenly, Patrick was angry at himself. Of course that’s what it would look like to David. Except… no.

“David, she was blackout drunk. You really think I’d do something like that?” He asked, a little hurt.

“I don’t know!” David replied, throwing his hands in the air. “I barely know you. I didn’t think you would, but she was all over you, and you were drunk, and then you left with her, and…” He trailed off.

“So you made out with Stevie because I hooked up with some girl?” Patrick didn’t know where he was getting the nerve to ask these questions. An abstract thought of how he’ll probably regret this in the future fluttered forward, but he pushed it aside as he waited for David’s response. He was somehow very invested in hearing the answer.

“You said you didn’t hook up with the girl.” David said, catching Patrick off guard. He wasn’t expecting that.
“I didn’t.”

“Okay, good.” David replied. And David practically heard the record scratch as everything stopped and he processed that. Good?

“Good?” He asked, unable to stop himself. He felt his heart beating very fast.

“I didn’t mean that. I meant fine. Fine.” David replied flippantly, but Patrick thought he seemed a little flustered. “Anyways, me making out with Stevie didn’t mean anything. She told me she just likes making out when she’s drunk. We’re not interested in dating. It was just… I was drunk, and you were off with that girl, and I was bored, and making out is fun, so--”

“It’s okay, David. You don’t have to explain yourself to me.” Patrick was starting to feel a little bad. David hadn’t done anything wrong. He didn’t have to explain himself to Patrick. He didn’t owe him anything. Although, he was sort of glad that David had explained it. He felt the knot in his stomach unclench a little, with the knowledge that David wasn’t going to be dating Stevie, now.

“I know that.” David replied, a little haughtily. And Patrick couldn’t help himself.

“Then why are you explaining yourself to me?” Patrick teased, and he smirked at David. This. This. This felt better. He watched David squirm, kind of adorably.

“I… I don’t-- I’m not. I’m just talking to you. Why do you care?” David replied, defensively.

“I don’t.”

“You don’t.” David clarified, sounding a little like he didn’t believe him. Maybe that was because Patrick was lying to him. He did care. For some reason, he cared. He just didn’t know why.

“Of course not.” Patrick doubled down on the lie. “I was just… curious. Because, because we live across the hall from them, and we all kind of hit it off today, and I was just wondering if you guys were going to be, like, dating or something now.” David’s face twisted in disgust at this.
“Ew, Patrick. On the first day? Come on. I’m not looking to get pinned down on the first day of university.” He replied, and again, Patrick felt relieved. Then David looked down at the laptop on his lap. “What are you watching?”

“Oh, just some old episodes of Nailed it. It always calms me down.” Patrick replied, still overly honest because of the alcohol. David’s eyes narrowed a little.

“Were you not calm?” He asked, a tinge of concern in his voice.

“What? No. That’s not what I--”

“I love that show. Can I watch with you?” He asked, and there was a vulnerability to his voice that wasn’t usually there. He spoke quietly, and with great control. Patrick smiled and nodded. Then he held out his arm, indicating for David to sit next to him on his bed. With what was maybe a blush and a tight smile, David did. Patrick felt his body alight with excitement as he felt his tall, dark, and handsome roommate tuck in next to him on the small twin size bed.

Patrick hit play on the screen, and the show began to play. “I love this episode.” David said, but Patrick barely heard him over the beating of his own heart. He found himself desperately trying to make excuses for why he was feeling the way he was feeling. Why he could feel himself getting hard, just sitting here and watching a comedy baking show.

“It’s the heat of the laptop making you hard,” his brain scrambled to explain. But that wasn’t it. That wasn’t it at all.

It wasn’t until later that it came to him. All at once. Like a fucking wrecking ball through the glass-walled shelter he’d built around his deepest, most secret truths. All the boxes he’d packed, so neatly away, never to be thought of again, laid open to waste.

They’d watched the show for about an hour, before David had fallen asleep. Patrick had been loathe to move him, telling himself it was because David deserved to rest, not because he was enjoying the way he was cuddled up, his head lolled sideways onto Patrick’s shoulder. But eventually, Patrick had woken David up and he got up to go to bed.

Patrick had shut his laptop, and the lights were off in the room at that point, but the moonlight shone through the window, and a pale light made David visible as he haphazardly shed his clothes in front of him. First, he’d pulled off his sweater, as carefully as a sleepy drunk person could do so. He tossed it on the floor without any care, making Patrick smile as he thought of how David would
probably come to regret that in the morning. Then Patrick found his eyes trail back to the pale skin of David’s back, lit by the moonlight, and once again, his heartbeat quickened.

Then David was pulling down his pants, stumbling a little as he tried to kick out of them. As he leaned over, Patrick could see his dark boxer briefs, and the moonlit shape of David’s ass. He tried not to look, but he couldn’t stop himself. He looked at his shining, thick thighs that met the dark line of those boxers, and felt a stirring within him.

When David was free of his pants, he roughly pulled his covers down, and then flopped into his bed. He adjusted, for a moment, getting comfortable, before he ended up laying on his side, facing Patrick. Even in the dark room, Patrick could see that he was smiling.

“Our first night.” He said, and his quiet voice made the stirring inside Patrick quicken.

“Goodnight, David.”

“Goodnight Patrick.”

Patrick closed his eyes and pretended to sleep. But he couldn’t sleep. He was too worked up, too confused. He watched David. At first, through his lashes, with his eyes most of the way shut so David wouldn’t see. Then, when he was sure David was sleeping, openly. He watched as that face, that expressive face, lay slack and peaceful, his lips parted slightly as he breathed deeply and evenly. He watched, and the thought.

It finally came to him, a while later. The wrecking ball of a thought. When he was staring up at David’s posters. He couldn’t seem to keep his eyes on Mariah, despite her provocative pose and big tits and ass on display. His eyes kept going back to George Michael. In that jacket. He thought of David in that jacket.

And then **WHAM!**

It hit him.

Patrick… was not straight. Patrick was not straight, and he had a crush on David. David his roommate.
Patrick was not straight, and he had a crush on David, his roommate.

_Holy shit._

He lay there, shell shocked, for quite some time before the memories started flooding back to him. All the memories he’d packed away. The thoughts he’d had over the years, physical reactions he’d written off, all of it. Like a Goddamn wrecking ball, breaking down the walls that had been constructed to keep those thoughts from getting out. Everything suddenly made so much _sense._

And Patrick was rocked to the core. And yet, he also felt this ultimate _relief_ , at the realization. Like it had been clawing its way forward inside his head for _so fucking long_ and it was finally free. He was finally aware of its presence. And he was. He was very aware. And so was his cock, that was achingly hard at that moment.

He reached down and _squeezed_ , hard at the base, and willed it to go away. He wanted desperately to make himself come, but he was scared. David was _right there._ Although, he was pretty sure he was sound asleep. But still. He couldn’t. He rolled over, hoping that not having David (or even George, for that matter) to look at might make things a little better.

Eventually, Patrick fell into a deep sleep, the exhaustion from the day, not to mention the life-changing journey of self-discovery he’d found himself on this evening, finally taking its toll.

And he dreamed of David Rose.

---

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed this!!! I have so much more planned. And if you liked it, please let me know what you thought! :)
Patrick's Perfect Day

Chapter Summary

Patrick has the most perfect day of his life. Something was BOUND to go wrong eventually...

Chapter Notes

Ok so first of all, sorry about how long it took me to update! I was undergoing a "job transition" and I'm now in a 3 week break between starting my new job! So expect lots of updates!

Second of all, please forgive any and all mistakes in here, this chapter somehow ended up at 13.5k, and I guarantee you I missed some. Also, I'm sorry it's so long! Lol

I hope you are ready for some pining, maybe some bed sharing? Hardcore flirting? Patrick falling head over heels for David?

Let me know what you think about the end ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patrick’s revelation had been a little overwhelming at first. It felt like, long ago, he’d been fitted with a lock around his heart. And he’d been trying to find the matching key, all this time, but nothing quite worked, so everything just stayed locked up inside. Now that he had the luxury of perspective, he thinks he used to look for his matching key a lot harder, when he was younger. But until recently, he’d all but given up.

He’d thought that maybe he just wasn’t meant to be unlocked. He looked around, and he didn’t think many people truly were. He thought that butterflies and sparks and fireworks were a thing of movies, of stories, mostly. Or for very lucky people. But he thought that very few people got to experience things like that in real life. That, for the most part, people just got by in life the best they could. They found comfort in other people as much as they could, but in the end, most people were in it alone. Soul mates was a fairy tale idea made up by Disney to sell cartoons to kids and was about as likely to happen to him as winning the lottery.

Patrick had stopped expecting to feel that spark, to experience those butterflies. He supposed nineteen years-old was a little young to be giving up, but he’d been with Rachel for years. She was perfect, everyone told him so. She was hot, she was funny and sweet. She loved him. He knew how lucky he was, how lucky everyone told him he was. How many other guys would have jumped at the opportunity to date her. Everyone told him she was the marrying type. Patrick knew she was the marrying type. He knew that was where their relationship would be headed, if they’d stayed
That’s why he had to leave. Because as much as Patrick’s mind had all but given up hope, his heart just never seemed to get the message. It had yearned for escape. It had yearned to find the matching key to unlock the aching tightness in his chest, that he’d feel any time he thought about love. The more time that passed, the harder it had become to bear. It was like every thought that got locked away, the room inside got smaller. Until the space inside him was filled to bursting with locked up feelings, repression at its very worst.

And then he left home, and it was the best fucking thing he’d ever done in his life. He left home, and within a single day he’d found his key, and he’d been unlocked, and it had been entirely fucking overwhelming. But God, was it freeing.

A single day, and everything had changed. Patrick was rocked to his core, but there was no denying it. The lock was off, his heart was free. Free to love, free to be itself, free to be broken. It was terrifying. But it was liberating. There was no denying it, no possible way to delude himself into not accepting the very simple (and yet overwhelming) truth.

He was gay, and he was falling for David Rose. Hard, fast, and completely.

It shouldn't have happened so quickly. It was almost embarrassing, really, how soon Patrick was following David around like a puppy. How he hung on his every word. How he touched him, far more often than was necessary. Because he couldn’t help himself. He’d obviously been feeling it from the moment they’d met, but it had been kicked into another gear after Patrick had had his George Michael-induced gay awakening.

The next morning had been a little awkward. Patrick didn’t know how to act, what to say. He’d been up half the night, trying to sort through all his thoughts and feelings. He’d had a lot of repressed memories floating up from the back of his consciousness, and they’d kept him awake. Things that were just suddenly coming back to him, suddenly making sense. The way he’d stare at the asses of the baseball players on the tv, that time at summer camp when he’d held Dustin’s hand at the campfire, the way he’d sneak glances at the other guys in the change room in high school. He’d written it all off to himself as innocent, and locked the memories away in boxes he’d never expected to open again.

And that first night, alone with David in their room, there had been one hell of a lot of boxes to unpack. It had taken half the night. It was past four before he’d finally passed out from sheer exhaustion. So he’d slept in, much later than he usually would. And yet, David was still asleep when he awoke.
When Patrick’s eyes had fluttered open, the sun shining onto his side of the room, the first thing he did was look across at David. And maybe that was a mistake, because morning wood was a lot harder to take care of when you shared your room with someone else. And there was no getting around it, Patrick felt himself get hard immediately as he took in the sight of his roommate across from him.

David’s hair was tousled, his face peaceful and slack as it lay turned towards Patrick in a deep sleep. He was on his stomach, and his arm was tucked underneath the pillow. His bare, muscular back was exposed, and he’d kicked one leg free of the comforter in his sleep. The expensive looking white blanket really only covered one leg and most of his ass, at this point, and Patrick swallowed hard as he found his eyes taking in that little bit that it wasn’t covering. He could see David’s expensive looking boxer briefs. He could see David’s thick, muscular thighs, and fuck did his cock fill with interest as he looked.

How had Patrick not known he was gay before!? The key he’d always thought of had always been just a fucking metaphor, but maybe there was more to it than he’d initially thought. Because 180s didn’t usually happen like this, he didn’t think. To go from so entirely repressed that he had no idea, to just accepting he was gay and getting hard over his roommate? In 24 hours? It just didn’t seem real. And yet it was happening. David had, perhaps literally, unlocked something inside Patrick, and it could not and would not be put back inside.

Denying this about himself at this point would be like denying the sky was blue, or that the world was round. It may be a lot to take in, but he was just going to have to get used to it. Whether David wanted him in return or not, Patrick was going to have to deal with this.

But he had no idea how.

It turned out, he was not all that great at dealing with it. He very quickly turned into what he shamefully thought of as a schoolkid with a crush around David, a phase Patrick had never really gone through himself when he’d been in junior high, so he didn’t know how to handle when it hit him. Everything David did or said was infinitely interesting or funny or deep, to Patrick. He was so hot, and Patrick wanted to be around him, always. Even better if he could touch him somehow. He craved the feel of him beneath his fingers, against his body. Patrick had it bad.

He’d laid there, that first morning, watching David sleep for an embarrassingly long time. He’d reached down below his blanket and squeezed desperately at the base of his aching cock, willing the erection to go away, but not allowing himself to stroke at it, despite how much he wanted to. He knew he could sneak off to the bathroom and rub one out. He was probably going to have to, after this. But he didn’t want to get up. He didn’t want to risk waking David up, to ruin this moment. He just wanted his damn hard-on to go away, because if David woke up right now, things were going to be really awkward.
It didn’t go away, but in a welcome twist, David didn’t make it awkward at all. Actually, in his blunt David sort of way, he’d made it kind of funny. Some time after 10, David began to stir. Patrick had shut his eyes, hoping to pretend to be asleep, as he realized that David’s eyes would likely be opening any second. He heard David yawn loudly a moment later, and found himself picturing him, shirtless, stretching his arms out, his chest flexing… and that wasn’t going to help make this fucking erection go away.

Goddamnit, Patrick. He thought, chastising himself. He’d never been a slave to his dick. He’d actually judged his friends over their constant horniness in high school. And now he was realizing he’d never been above it all, as he had thought he had been, after all. He now knew he’d just been looking in the wrong direction. The potential had always been there, locked up inside him. And now, at nineteen, he was going to have to deal with all of it at once, without the awkward years of practice most people would have had by that point in their lives.

He allowed his eyes to crack open at the sound of David’s yawn, and looked over at him. David smiled at him sleepily, and Patrick felt his insides begin to squirm pleasantly. “Mm, morning.” David said, his voice lower than yesterday, possibly hoarse from sleep, or from the party, and entirely sexy. Patrick cleared his throat.

“Morning, sleep well?” He asked, and David stretched again in response, this time in full glorious view of Patrick, who did his best not to openly stare. He wasn’t sure how good his best was, but he tried. David’s arms had reached up and flexed, his back arching, his entire body getting a good, solid, morning stretch, and his bare chest and arms was on display the entire time. When David was done, he lifted his comforter a little and looked down at himself, before dropping it and looking over at Patrick guiltily.

“Mmhmm, yeah, it would appear that I slept very well.” David replied, and Patrick laughed at the tight tone in his words, the self deprecating edge to his humour. “Tell me, Patrick, we are going to be sharing this room all year so there’s no point dancing around it, what is our protocol going to be for morning wood?” He asked bluntly, and Patrick almost choked.

He did kind of choke, but it turned to a laugh. A sudden, startled laugh he hadn’t been expecting. David was so blunt, and yet so sharp at the same time. Patrick thought he was forever going to have to be on his toes, around him. And that was exciting. No one had ever excited Patrick like this before.

“Ummm…” Patrick replied dumbly, realizing almost too late that he’d been asked an actual question and David was waiting for a response. But he didn’t know what the hell to say, how to respond to something like that. Luckily, David pressed on, unbothered.
“I’m going to just put out a general housekeeping rule that all -personal business- can be attended to in the shower, or bathroom, or when the other person isn’t around, or whatever. That’s just good manners.” Patrick laughed.

“My parents did raise me to have excellent manners.” He replied, teasing David just a little in his tone.

“Good, so, I’m just going to hang out in bed for a bit and wait for this situation to settle down. I didn’t even look at Insta or Twitter yesterday. I have a lot to catch up on. So if you want to go get ready first, I’ll go after.” David replied, reaching to pull his phone off the shelf at the head of the bed. He unlocked it and began to scroll before looking up at Patrick, confused. “Aren’t you going to get up?” He asked, and Patrick smirked a little and shrugged back at him, embarrassed but unable to resist the impulse to tease David.

“I could get up, but we’ve just established that would just be bad manners.” He replied, and watched as realization of what his words meant hit David, his eyes widening a little, a mischievous smile playing at his lips. “So I’m just going to chill here for a bit until - how did you put it? - this situation settles down.”

David bit his lips between his teeth and nodded, his eyes shining. Patrick felt a thrill go through him, flirting like that with David. Although, he wasn’t entirely sure that David knew that it was flirting. He didn’t think David had been flirting with him when he’d joked about his morning erection. He thought David was just comfortable talking about topics like that. He’d said he’s spent half the summer on nude beaches, he had to be pretty comfortable with his body. And it couldn’t all be sexual to him.

Nineteen year old guys woke up with hard-ons. For no reason at all, half the time. That was just a fact of life, of growing up. Guys sharing a room were going to have to get used to that sort of thing. It was something funny, something to joke about. It wasn’t something awkward, unless one of the guys liked the other. Which...

Patrick wasn’t going to let it get awkward. David didn’t have to know that Patrick liked him. He didn’t have to know how jealous Patrick had been about Stevie last night, and how, right now, he was hoping David’s own situation had nothing to do with a lingering attraction to her. David didn’t need to know any of that, and he definitely didn’t have to know that Patrick’s dick was hard at that moment because he’d woken up and seen him half naked. That he’d been picturing what his body would feel like, under his wandering fingers. Whether his skin was really as soft as it looked.

David didn’t have to know any of that.
So Patrick played it off as a joke. He scrolled Sportsnet on his phone for a few minutes, focusing his mind on anything but sex, and eventually he felt the blood begin to leave his center and redistribute itself throughout the rest of his body. When it felt safe, he got up without saying anything, grabbed a towel and his toiletries, and headed to the shower.

There was no wait, thank God, and he’d stood under the piping hot stream of water for far too long, trying to wash away the feelings. But there was no washing them away. Patrick accepted it, and jerked himself to completion in the shower, thinking of David’s body the whole time. He was careful to clean up after himself when he was done. He brushed his teeth in the shower, and eventually felt he had no excuse to stay, so he turned off the water, dried off, and headed back to his room to face David once more.

As far as Patrick was concerned, the next few days had been close to perfection. Their second day had involved a charity event, where they were sent in groups around the town to do various activities for charity. By some miracle, David and Patrick had been assigned to the same group, a car wash at a local Chevy dealership, and the day had been nothing short of magical. It had been hot, and there was no shade, and they kept getting wet, so David had shed his sweater, and was wearing only the white tank top he’d had on underneath. Patrick had been quick to spray him with water, wanting to see what it would look like, wet and clinging to his skin. He hadn’t been disappointed. It had been worth the cursing out he’d received from David in response.

“I’ll have you know your revenge will be swift and it will be severe, and you won’t know when or where, but know it’s coming.” David had said, very seriously, but his threat had been betrayed by the small smile he had on his face. It sent waves of warmth through Patrick’s body, and he just smiled and laughed, and splashed him again. This had started a little water war, the likes of which had been happening on and off amongst the freshman volunteers all morning. People laughed and joined in, and soon everyone was soaking wet and there were bubbles and suds everywhere.

Even David joined in, and seemed genuinely happy. At least in the moment. Afterwards, he complained a little about his sneakers being very expensive, but he didn’t seem too mad to Patrick. Everyone dried off pretty quickly in the sun, and they were only a little damp as they piled on the bus that would take them back up to campus. There was one transfer downtown, and then a fifteen minute ride up along the river to the campus that was just north of town.

David had sat down next to Patrick, and collapsed against him immediately. He laid his head on Patrick’s shoulder and groaned about being exhausted from the sun, and how he needed a quick nap, and would Patrick wake him up when they got to the station? Patrick had graciously accepted, and shuffled a little to make it more comfortable for David to lean in against him. “Here, sleep on my shoulder, I’ve got you.” He said, the words out his mouth before he thought them through. But there was no time or reason to panic over them, because David just smiled a little sleepily, and snuggled in next to him. The bus began to move, and David was asleep within moments.
Patrick tried not to grin like an idiot, that entire ride home, but it was very hard, what with his arm wrapped around the guy he was sort of *majorly* crushing on. And today hadn’t made anything easier. If anything, it had solidified the crush. Proved to Patrick that it wasn’t a fluke. There was no writing his feelings off as anything else… he was *into* David Rose. In a very non-platonic way.

Which was wrong on so many levels. They were roommates, for one. That had to be a terrible idea. They’d be stuck together, if anything went wrong. And something would almost certainly go wrong… because how could Patrick be enough for David, with his zero experience, he had nothing to offer. How could Patrick ever hope to keep him?

Patrick was piecing together that David was a real man of the world. He’d travelled a lot, and slept with a lot of people. Even at his age, he was miles ahead of Patrick in terms of experience. And now Patrick was also worried about the fact that after making out with Stevie, maybe he wasn’t gay after all?

What Patrick definitely knew was that he was *not* going to be putting himself out there on this one. He wasn’t going to say anything or do anything about this crush situation. But that wasn’t to say he wasn’t going to *enjoy* David’s company for all it was worth. That wasn’t to say he wasn’t going to casually flirt with him, touch him at every opportunity. He wanted to be around David at every opportunity. And thankfully, the same seemed to be true in reverse, as well. They waited for each other before leaving for meal times, they socialized together, they went to bed at the same time.

On the third night, they’d all snuck out of the building after midnight to go swimming in the river off of the side of the library. They’d all kept their eyes out of the telltale flashlights of the campus security and descended upon the old concrete steps that went down into the cool water of the river. David had held Patrick’s hand as they went down the steep steps towards the riverfront, and Patrick had felt warmth shoot up his arm from where their skin connected. It was such a casual, natural thing, to be touching each other. It felt… right. It didn’t have to mean anything, Patrick told himself. He saw other people all around them similarly casual with physical affection. He and David were no different.

There was something about being away at University, apart from their parents, that had made people behave in a very - *uninhibited* - way. People were sleeping around, friendships were being forged, people were free with their love and affection, and that seemed to include same-sex expressions of affection. All around him, Patrick noticed girls holding hands and cuddling, or guys with their arms around each other or hugging. It was nothing like it was back home, where guys would blurt out idiotic things like “no homo!” if they accidentally touched hands when reaching into a bowl of corn chips.

Patrick had used the people around him to justify himself being very free with his affections
towards his roommate. Patrick liked nothing more than when they were touching. He draped his arm around David’s shoulder at every opportunity. On the second night, drunk and once again a little high and hanging out in Stevie and Twyla’s room with a few other people, Patrick had leaned back against the wall on the bed, and pulled David in to sit against him, between his legs. It had been risky, if he’d gotten hard, but he’d been too drunk to consider the consequences.

David had melted back against him, and Patrick had played with his arms. Once again, someone had commented on how cute they were as roommates, and Patrick glowed under the praise. They were adorable, it was true. “Jealousy is not a good colour on you, Jessica.” David had said, and Patrick chuckled and moved his arms to wrap around David possessively. David moved his hands up to hug Patrick’s arms against him.

Everything was right with the world.

On the third day, there had been a waffle bar. There were industrial-grade waffle irons and jugs full of batter, and an entire island’s worth of toppings. This was the only day that David had managed to wake up before Patrick.

Patrick had awoken to a very eager David, wearing nothing but his black designer boxer briefs, having just rolled out of bed himself, shaking his shoulder and whispering. “Patrick, hey, Patrick wake up.”

“Mm-awake.” Patrick mumbled back, smiling despite his instincts wanting to snap grumpily at whoever had woken him out of such a sound sleep.

“It’s waffle day, Patrick. You promised we’d go down early.” David had whispered urgently, and Patrick groaned and chuckled ruefully into his pillow as he attempted to roll away from David and go back to sleep. “Oh no you don’t.” David had said, yanking him back around and pinning his wrists to the bed to prevent him from rolling again.

“Is this my payback for splashing you?” Patrick asked, not hating being pinned to the bed by David at all, smirking up at his roommate from his vulnerable position.

“No, this is waffle time. You’ll know your payback when you get it.” David replied confidently and a little ominously, and Patrick laughed.

“Okay, I’m up. You can let go of me.” Patrick replied, though he didn’t really want David to let go
of him.

David regarded him critically. “Okay, you have between fifteen and twenty minutes before I will be presentable enough for breakfast, at which point I expect you to be ready to accompany me.” He said, commandingly. Patrick couldn’t help the twitch he felt from his dick at being bossed around like that, but tried to ignore it as he nodded up at David seriously.

“Yes sir, Mr. Bossypants.” He replied, deadpan, and waited to see the crack in David’s domineering facade. He didn’t have to wait long, as he was rewarded with a bashful smile in response.

“It’s just David. Mr. Bossypants is my father.” He replied, and with that, let go of Patrick and stood up, grabbing his robe and wrapping it around himself. “I’ll be back in five minutes to do an abbreviated version of my hair. You better be out of bed.” David said, stopping just inside the door and pointing at Patrick.

“Yes, sir.” Patrick agreed, and smiled as he watched David turn and leave.

David had eaten three whole waffles that morning, and somehow, Patrick had felt himself turned on by the spectacle of the whole thing. That, and David didn’t exactly leave it to the imagination that he was enjoying the food he was eating. With every “mmm!” and “ohhhh” David uttered, Patrick felt himself stirring with interest. What would he sound like during sex? He thought, and then flushed with shame and shock, unused as he was to thoughts like that.

The fourth day was a little lighter in terms of pre-planned group activities. The freshmen were encouraged to head down into the town of Peterborough, get to know the area. There was a free public zoo near the school campus they could visit, or restaurants or shops in town, or various scenic spots along the river that bisected the town. There was a canoe museum everyone claimed they had intention of visiting, but no one really seemed interested in that day at least.

David, Patrick, Stevie, and Twyla headed into town around noon, with Ted and Miguel (WHATISHISNAMEAGAIN) tagging along. David had needed a short nap after eating a very large breakfast of pancakes and scrambled eggs with bacon, and Patrick had organized his things while David had slept. And maybe glanced over at him, once or twice. Or a dozen times. But he couldn’t help it. David was just so fucking attractive to Patrick. He couldn’t explain it. A week ago, if Patrick had had even the slightest clue that he had been gay, he wouldn’t have thought someone like David would be his type. He’d probably picture a baseball or hockey player in that role.

But now, it was only David. In three short days, he had redefined his type. If a type could be one
specific person. But he was, David was his type. It wasn’t just physical, although he was finding it was also very physical, judging by the way his cock was either semi, or very, hard around him on a near-constant basis. But it was more than that. He loved his dramatic personality, his creativity, even his neuroses. He loved the interesting anecdotes and facts he would pepper into conversations. And he loved the way he looked when he slept.

It was already becoming a bit of a problem, because Patrick had basically unlimited access to David when he slept. He could watch him, he could study his face, stare at his lips. He could and he did. He felt like a starving man being faced with an all you can eat buffet, and he wanted to gorge himself on David’s gorgeous face. But Patrick needed sleep too. It was just hard to want to close his eyes, when he knew what he could be looking at if they were open.

That fourth afternoon, they’d gone to lunch at a little local pizza place they’d heard everyone raving about that had big, thin crust pizzas with the most insane and delicious topping combinations. It hadn’t been oversold. They’d walked with their slices through the charming center of town, and down along the river, eventually stopping to sit at a picnic table they’d come across. With six of them, it was a tight fit, and Patrick had enjoyed the firm feeling of David pressing in beside him.

It was a great afternoon. They’d parted ways with Ted and Miguel a little past 2. They wanted to go to the zoo, but Stevie and David wanted to go to this local tavern they’d heard about, the Pig’s Ear. And if David wanted to go, Patrick wanted to go. And Twyla was usually game to go anywhere, especially if there was beer involved. So the four of them walked back up through town towards the bar.

As they walked, David’s hand brushed past Patrick’s more than once. They were walking close, and every time it happened, it was like electric sparks jolting him with warmth and desire. He wanted nothing more than to reach out and take it, to thread his fingers through David’s, to brush his thumb over his knuckles. But he couldn’t do that… could he?

He deflected the feeling by touching David in a more appropriate way, play punching him in the arm and pushing him a little playfully, and then hopping away nimbly from his retaliatory swipe. David got that cute sideways smile look on his face, and his eyes narrowed, and the chase was on. “Here we go again.” Stevie had remarked, dryly. But Patrick didn’t care. He was having too great of a time.

They got into the bar without a problem. He and David were of age, after all. And Stevie and Twyla both had credible out-of-province fake IDs. The bar was dingy, but also kind of perfect. It had soul. Patrick could feel the tradition of years of students, seeped into the very walls and wooden seats of the booths. There was a big jukebox in the back, several tables and booths, a pool table, and a bar. Beyond the bar, there was a second room that used to be a smoking section, and a door to the outdoor patio. They ordered a tray of beers, a house specialty, and took it out to the
They chose a table in the shade, with a nice colourful umbrella with the logo of a beer company on it, and carefully laid the heavy tray down. It was big and round, and had 20 small glasses of beer on it. There was also a pack of peanuts balanced on the edge, a recommendation Twyla had received from an older student she’d been flirting with the night before at the river.

“Are we seriously going to do the peanut thing?” David asked with a bit of a sneer of distaste. Stevie rolled her eyes in response.

“From what I hear, we aren’t officially Trent students, until we’ve done the peanut races at the Pig’s Ear.” Twyla replied brightly, reaching out to take the pack of plain unsalted peanuts and carefully ripping the top.

“Remind me how this works?” Patrick asked, chuckling a little at the lingering look of distrust on David’s face from where he sat next to him around the round patio table.

“You take a beer, on the count of 3 we all drop a peanut into our glass, and the last person whose peanut floats back up has to chug.” Twyla explained.

“Seems reasonable.” David replied, sarcastically, and Patrick laughed.

“Come on, David, it’ll be fun.” Patrick cajoled, reaching over and nudging him. He smiled when he saw the begrudging smile form on David’s face.

“Okay. But this seems like more of an evening activity. After a healthy amount of pre-drinking. But far be it for me to resist the urgings of some good old fashioned peer pressure.” He finally agreed, and they all got set up with one of the small glasses of beer, and Twyla poured a couple peanuts in each of their hands to get ready. David immediately popped all the peanuts in his mouth, chewed, swallowed, and smiled at Twyla before holding out his hand.

“Oh, I accidentally ate my peanuts, more please.” He said, and Patrick laughed.

“We can order bar food, David. Leave the peanuts for the races.” He softly chided, and chuckled once more at the bright look of excitement the words ‘bar food’ seemed to bring out on David’s handsome features.
“Ooh, do you think they have nachos?”

They ended up going through two more trays of beers. Each tray was only twenty bucks, it was really a pretty great deal, but they were all way too drunk for only 6:30pm by the time they’d left. They were cutting it close to be back up to campus before dinner ended, but Patrick thought they’d make it.

He’d done particularly terribly at the races. He kept choosing dud peanuts, he supposed, and he thought he might have gotten a little more drunk than everyone else, which was a little embarrassing. Although no one really seemed to notice. Everyone was laughing and telling stories. More students they knew from Lady Eaton had shown up a while after they’d arrived, and they’d ended up having a bit of a party there on the patio.

Things got crowded, and when Patrick had gone in search of a bathroom, he’d returned to find his chair stolen. So he’d taken the opportunity to sit on David’s lap. David’s arm had wrapped around him immediately, making him feel safe, and wanted. And drunk Patrick leaned into the touch of his hand gently rubbing up and down his side and arm.

“Having fun?” David asked him, after a while, leaning forward and whispering the question into his ear breathily. Patrick felt shivers all the way down his spine, and a surge of blood rush straight to his cock, despite the tremendous amount of beer he had consumed in the past couple hours.

“Mm Hmm.” He answered, smiling and leaning back against David. He let his head flop limply back over one of his shoulders, feeling the dizzy swirl of alcohol in his brain as he did, and then turned his face in to press against David’s neck. “Y’er comfy.” He said, nuzzling in, and smiled at the way David’s arms came up around him and squeezed him tightly.

“Hmm, and you’re drunk.” David replied, chuckling lightly. Patrick felt it as well as heard it, leaning against his chest as he was.

“And y’er not?” He asked a little defensively, twisting to look up at David’s face. Because of the alcohol, he didn’t panic at how close it was. He wanted to kiss it. His lips. But even as drunk as he was, he wasn’t going to do that.
“Oh, no, I am. But not as drunk as you.” David replied, and Patrick shivered as he felt David’s lips brush past his ear. “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of you.” He added, his words barely audible. But Patrick heard. And they sucked all the air from his lungs. His inebriated body was reacting in all the ways it shouldn’t be, sitting publically on David’s lap as he was. He wanted to squirm against him. He wanted to turn around and straddle him. He wanted to make out with him.

Patrick had never been like this, had never felt such urges before in his entire life. It was a lot to handle. So much that he couldn’t really control something as arbitrary as a filter anymore, when he was so busy controlling himself from climbing all over David and making an ass of himself. And so, the words were out of his mouth before he had a chance to think about them. “Mm, I like how that sounds.” He did. He really did. But he hadn’t meant to say that. He wasn’t entirely sure he had said it. It felt more like a dream.

“What was that? Like how what sounds?” David was asking, and because he still wasn’t sure if this was a dream or not, Patrick answered him.

“You taking care of me.”

If he hadn’t been drunk, he may have noticed the way David had stuttered, choked a bit on the very air he was breathing. But Patrick was very drunk. And he didn’t notice. He wouldn’t remember saying that, later. After sobering up. But David would. David would remember it for a long time.

When it was time to go, David and Stevie had steered Patrick out of the bar, and they began the short walk over to the bus station in the center of town. Patrick was slow and a little stumbly, so David had taken his hand and pulled him along. He wanted to make sure they’d make it in time for the next bus. They’d have to, if they had any hope of the free meal awaiting them back in the Lady Eaton cafeteria. And skipping a free dinner was not on-brand for David Rose.

Patrick had dozed against David’s shoulder on the way back up to campus, the sway of the bus quickly lulling him to sleep, much the way it had done to David the day before. He awoke a couple times because of bumps or turns, or whatnot, and smiled at the feeling of David’s arm around him. Once, he could have sworn he’d felt his fingers in his hair. He’d hummed in contentment and fallen quickly back to sleep, before he could determine whether it was real or just a dream. It didn’t matter.

Patrick had never been happier. It had been four days, and he was the happiest he’d ever been in his entire life. He kept waiting for something terrible to happen, and yet, things just seemed to continue to get better. The more they got to know each other, the more comfortable they got. Even Stevie and Twyla.
Later that evening, after Patrick had slept through dinner and the rest of them had gone down for spaghetti night, they’d all piled onto Twyla’s bed to watch a movie. Patrick and David cuddled close on one side, and on Patrick’s other, Twyla snuggled in. Patrick’s arm draped around her comfortably, his fingers brushing the bare skin of her arm. But he didn’t pay it any attention. His mind could only seem to focus on the heat he felt radiating from David’s body, the way David would absently brush patterns on his knee and leg.

Stevie was tucked into David’s other side, and Patrick wasn’t even feeling jealous about it anymore. He was feeling too good to be jealous, and plus, David had made it very clear since the first night that it wasn’t anything to be worked up about. It was just two people making out because they were drunk and high and it felt good at the time.

Patrick wondered if he and David could make out for the same reason. Making out didn’t have to be some massive deal. You could do it just because it felt good, according to David. And God would it feel good. Patrick knew it would. But he also knew that it would definitely wouldn’t mean nothing to him. He and David couldn’t just casually make out and then continue on like it hadn’t happened. Patrick couldn’t handle that. There was no way he’d be able to detangle the quickly deepening feelings he had for David from the act, so he couldn’t give in. Because if David didn’t feel the same, then everything would be ruined.

So Patrick held off. He flirted like a motherfucker, but he held off from kissing him. Or touching him anywhere explicitly off limits. Even if he wanted to. He couldn’t do anything that there was no coming back from. He could skirt the line, maybe, occasionally. But he couldn’t cross it. Like right now. It was okay that they were holding hands as they watched the second movie (Scream), but it wouldn’t be okay if he pulled David’s knuckles up to his lips, like he wanted to. It was all about not crossing the line.

Patrick’s stomach had threatened to fly away, when it had happened. He’d basically fallen into a trance because of the patterns David had been absently drawing into his knee and thigh, and then suddenly David’s movements stopped, his hand laying flat, fingers splayed, across his knee. The stop in the pattern jerked him out of his trance, and without the benefit of thought, Patrick had reached out and placed his hand over David’s. He didn’t know why he’d done it, but when David had stretched his fingers out and interlocked them with Patrick’s, he was glad he had.

That had been the start of it. At some point, they’d moved their hands so they were palm to palm, fingers interlocked, both of them brushing at their knuckles with their thumbs. When the movie got scary, David would squeeze, and Patrick would brush his thumb comfortably. Twyla and Stevie fell asleep halfway through the movie, but David and Patrick stayed awake. They didn’t dare move, for fear of waking them up and bursting the wonderful little bubble they’d found themselves in. Or, Patrick didn’t want to at least.

He was so glad David wanted to be this kind of friend. An affectionate, cuddly kind. He didn’t
think that David wanted more from him, the way Patrick wanted more from David. So if he couldn’t have that, at least Patrick could have this. He thought he could handle this. Just getting to be near him, being allowed to touch him. It might be enough. Besides, it was way too soon to be making irreversible moves like kissing his roommate. *Nothing you can’t take back, Brewer!*

Twyla was leaned in toward him, her head dozing on his chest, her arm hugging around his middle, his left arm draped over her shoulder holding her in place. It wasn’t lost on him, how little it was doing for him. He felt affectionate towards her, too. This little group of friends was quickly knitting itself together, and he thought pretty soon he’d be ready to take a bullet for any of them. But it was absolutely nothing compared to how David’s body felt against him.

It was like there was a magnet between them, and Patrick was being pulled into his orbit. He wanted to be touching him in every way. As things in the movie got a little gorey and jump-scarey, David curled into Patrick a little, at one point hiding his face in his shoulder. Patrick had instinctively reached up and put his fingers through David’s hair, holding his head there, safe, until the scene had ended.

“These movies are, like, a million years old. How can they still scare me like this?” David had asked in a whisper, not wanting to wake the girls up. Patrick grinned.

“These movies are timeless.”

“Tell that to the wardrobe department.”

That night, they’d been mostly sober by the time it came to go to bed. It had been a different experience, undressing for bed with David around, without the benefit of alcohol or weed to lower his inhibitions. It was all he could do to stop himself reaching up and pouring himself a stiff drink. Patrick was tempted to keep his t-shirt on, and maybe throw on some flannel pants or something. Sleepover attire. But he didn’t. Because somehow, in only two nights, they’d kind of made it a tradition to strip down to their boxers for bed. And Patrick was never one to break with tradition.

When David had tugged his shirt carefully over his head, exposing that beautifully toned chest, Patrick had felt a surge of blood flow down to his cock. He panicked, for a second, wondering what to do. But then the panic just, kind of, ebbed away. He couldn’t explain it. Perhaps it had to do with the confidence he’d gained around David the last four days. The comfort. The way they’d been cuddled up for the last three and a half hours, holding hands and acting like that was what every friend does. Maybe it was where David came from, but not from small town Thunder Bay.
Friendships were a lot less touchy back home.

It was a combination of everything, perhaps, including David’s nonchalance that very morning over his “morning wood” that gave Patrick the confidence to just own it. If David noticed… was that really that big of a deal? He wasn’t going to put it on display. But did he really have to hide it? He had a feeling David had seen a lot worse.

And maybe Patrick wanted David to see.

No. That was crazy. That was just one of those crazy thoughts that shoot through someone’s mind but they don’t actually mean. Patrick wasn’t that kind of guy. Was he? What was that kind of guy? Was that a bad guy? Or was it ok? To be forward like that. To want David to see what he’d done to him, cuddling against him all night. To take charge.

What if he just took those three or four steps across the room, and ran his hands over that beautiful stomach and chest? Pried those lips open and licked inside to taste him. Would he taste as good as he thought he would? Minty, and fresh. David had already brushed his teeth and was ready for bed. He knew he’d taste like toothpaste, and his skin would be soft and supple from his nightly moisturizing regime. Patrick’s body yearned for it. He felt himself harden the rest of the way. His jeans hid most of the evidence, but if David looked down, he would see.

Patrick knew he was putting on a bit of a show, as he took off his shirt. Sue him. He wasn’t making David watch. But if he wanted to, Patrick wanted to give him the opportunity. What in the Goddamn hell was coming over him? He clenched his abs, and pulled the shirt from the bottom hem slowly over his head, stretching his arms upward to pull it over his head. His movements were slow and unhurried, but not too slow as to be obvious. Deliberate.

He didn’t know for sure, but he thought David watched. After that, Patrick had slowly unbuckled his belt, and David did the same. They grinned at each other, sheepishly, before turning around to pull their pants off and get into bed. Patrick slept very well that night, and once again, he dreamed of David.

On the fifth day, there had been a fair in the main quad near the library for clubs and teams etc. David hadn’t been overly enthusiastic by the idea of signing up for a club, but had taken a couple pamphlets for the art and yoga groups. Patrick had grabbed at least a dozen, overwhelmed by all the different choices.
He’d signed up for email updates from half the tables at the fair, but he was most interested in the drama club. He loved to perform, and the girl at the desk had said they were planning on doing Hair, which was... well it was the most non-highschool play they could have possibly been doing, and he couldn’t be more interested. Patrick remembered his drama teacher had tried to put it on at his high school, but the PTA had had a fit and stopped it before it even got started.

That afternoon there had been a mandatory hour-long seminar on “campus life”, encompassing everything from a safe-sex talk, to a briefing on which campus bars were open on each night. David had sat to Patrick’s right, and he’d taken his hand halfway through and begun to draw a swirling, almost henna-like pattern all over Patrick’s hand and wrist. He didn’t think the ink was all that good for him, but Patrick didn’t dare stop David. Every pass of the pen, every brush of David’s fingers sent the butterflies in his chest to fluttering. And besides, it was kind of beautiful. David was talented, even when he wasn’t trying to be.

Patrick felt himself fall a little harder, for his raven-haired roommate. If that was even possible.

David made him wash off the designs before dinner, because hygiene was extremely important to him. Patrick had felt a little sad, watching the blue ink of the bic pen start to bleed and mix, and the distinction of the patterns turned to wash. But if David did it once, David could do it again. They had an entire year together. The thought made Patrick soar with happiness.

That night, there was another floor party. This time, it had largely begun in David and Patrick’s room, as people kept stopping in, and then someone started playing some music, and then one thing turned into another and suddenly there was a rager on the second floor. David had been surprisingly relaxed, despite the massive number of people that kept coming in and out of their room. He had stripped his bed of its pristine white comforter, and carefully stowed it in the closet. But beyond that, he was just going with the flow.

They got drunk, and sang along to bad pop music. Or, as David put it, amazing pop music. They smoked another joint, because everywhere he looked it seemed like people had weed they wanted to share with him. He was going to have to cut it back a little, once classes began the next week. But for now, Patrick was committed to the experience. He wanted to have fun, cut loose, and make memories. And it seemed the more Patrick said yes to new experiences, the better everything was going. He had spent so long saying no to everything. It felt good to finally start saying yes.

It didn’t hurt that David was adorable when he was high. His eyes got so squinty, and he couldn’t seem to stop giggling, and he told the funniest, most rambling stories. He also seemed to become very free with his touches, Patrick found. Even with Stevie and Twyla, and occasionally some of the other students that had started to make up what Patrick would think of as the second ring of
their friendship circle. So when they smoked, Patrick made sure that he was the one next to David. So he would be the focus of that touching energy.

“You’re so soft. Why are you so soft?” David had asked, not long after they’d smoked. He was pretty baked, and running his hands up and down Patrick’s shirt. Patrick was basically in heaven.

“It’s a flannel shirt, David.” He’d said, trying to tease him a little. Because that’s what he did, that was kind of their thing. He thought David liked it, as long as Patrick was nice about it. He didn’t think a lot of people had been nice to David, in his past.

“It’s like a baby angora goat, or -- what’s something that’s soft? -- umm”

“It’s just flannel, David.” Patrick replied, smiling.

“Mm, well, I like it.”

“You’re just high.”

“True. I still like it.” David leaned forward to rub his cheek against Patrick’s shoulder. Patrick felt like sparks might literally shoot from his chest, as he felt a warm rush of desire wash over him.

“You’re very high.” Patrick chuckled. Then he lifted his arms to encircle David and squeeze him tight, groaning. “Maybe I’ll wear flannel more often.” He added, without thinking. He didn’t even realize what he’d said when he’d said it, although it would come back to him, later. In a sober moment of reflection.

Oh, God. Patrick had it bad. How was it even possible? 120 hours had somehow felt like 120 days, and Patrick just felt himself intoxicated by the freedom that this new place afforded him. Freedom he’d never had in the past, to be himself. He was so glad that no one he knew had opted to go to Trent. It was half the reason he’d chosen the school to begin with. He’d wanted an entirely fresh start. He supposed, for this very reason. Even if he hadn’t known his intention at the time. Some part of himself, deep down, must have been looking for a place he could start over. And starting over, he was doing.

That night, the party had raged on until past one thirty, when campus security came and broke everything up. No one got in trouble, it was just time to shut it down. People had shuffled back to
their rooms, and Patrick and David had been left alone, at last. “This place is fucking disgusting.”
David had said, looking around.

“Le’s clean in the morning.” Patrick had replied, yawning to punctuate how tired he was. But he
could see that David was fixated.

“I might have nightmares, knowing I’m sleeping in this filth.” Patrick sighed dramatically but
smiled to show he was kidding, and grabbed the garbage can from under his side of the desk. He
then started to walk around the room, grabbing cups and bottles and tossing them inside. It really
wasn’t hard work, and before long the room was largely back to normal. And it was worth it, for
the megawatt smile it earned him from David.

“Thank you.” He had said, softly, and his smile softened, and twisted shyly to the side. And
Patrick’s heart had clenched, and he thought he probably went bright red, blushing obviously for
David to see.

“Not a problem.” He replied, with a shrug.

Patrick was first to pull his shirt off, that night. He tossed it into the laundry basket, knowing he’d
spilled some beer down it earlier, and David followed suit. They were becoming casual about
being shirtless around each other, and Patrick couldn’t have been happier about that. It felt
exciting, every time. Like he was doing something vaguely naughty, even though that couldn’t
have been farther from the truth.

David retrieved his comforter from his closet, and went about making his bed. Shirtless. Patrick
wasn’t sure, but he thought he may have been staring with his mouth hanging open for a good few
seconds before he caught himself. He’d gone to bed quickly to hide the hard on that visual had
given him, though he and David had laid awake for a while, just talking in the dark.

They were almost asleep, when there had been an urgent knocking at their door. “Guys, hey guys,
are you awake?” It was Twyla.

“Mnyuh--” David groaned, incoherently, from the bed across from Patrick. David seemed a little
out of it, so Patrick got up, reluctantly, and answered the door.

“Twyla, what’s--”
“I’m so sorry.” Twyla said, pushing past the half-naked Patrick without even glancing at him, and entering the dark dorm room. “Stevie has a visitor, and long story short, I am not welcome. Can I sleep in here? I’ll sleep on the floor, it’s okay, I brought a pillow and my blanket.” It was true, her arms were laden with bedding, and Patrick couldn’t help but feel a little extra generous, thinking of Stevie having sex with someone in their room. Someone that wasn’t David.

“Sure, Twy, no problem.” Patrick said easily, shutting the door behind her gently. “But you take my bed, I’ll sleep on the ground.” It was the only gentlemanly thing to do.

“Oh, I couldn’t. Don’t worry, I’ve slept on the floor lots. When my cousins all get together, we--”

“Just take the damn bed, Twyla. He’s too much of a gentleman to give in and I’m exhausted.” David moaned, his head buried under his pillow, and Twyla acquiesced. And Patrick smiled, thinking that David thought he was a gentleman.

“Okay, thanks guys.” She said, smiling, and moving to sit down on Patrick’s bed. He stripped the comforter and grabbed his pillow before she settled in.

“You’re very welcome.” David replied, and Patrick rolled his eyes affectionately.

“I’m the one giving up my bed.”

“Mm, and I’m letting her sleep in the same space as me. I’d say this was more of a team effort. Roommates, and all that.” David replied, and Patrick chuckled.

“Okay, David.” Patrick started to get settled on the hard floor, between Twyla and David. After about fifteen minutes, he’d rolled about fifteen times, trying to find the most comfortable position. He was still drunk and pretty high from earlier, and he still couldn’t get comfortable. Was he getting that old already?

“Alright, get up here.” David had said, eventually. Twyla was already softly snoring from the other bed. But David was obviously awake still, and witnessing how uncomfortable Patrick was.

“What?” Patrick asked, caught off guard.
“Up, off the floor. C’mon.” David replied, his words a little slurred, but warm and inviting. Patrick felt a stirring inside him. Both of them were in their underwear, and David was inviting him to sleep with him. Could he possibly accept?

“It’s okay, David…” He argued weakly. He felt like he had to push back a little, even though he wanted so badly for David to insist.

“Nope, I said up.” David replied sternly, and it was clear he was still a little tipsy, but there was something to his bossy tone that did it for Patrick, and he couldn’t have disobeyed if he’d dreamed of it. And he wasn’t dreaming of it.

Patrick grabbed his pillow, and slowly climbed into bed next to David, who was holding his comforter and sheet open, waiting for him to get in and under. When he was in place, David wrapped his arm around Patrick’s bare midsection and shuffled around to get comfortable. There wasn’t even enough room for them both to lie on their backs, on the tiny twin bed. The only way to do it was to lay back to front.

“Big spoon or little?” David had asked, quietly so not to wake Twyla, and the whispered sound of his voice sent shivers down his body. He felt his stomach erupt into butterflies, and lower, Patrick felt his cock hardening.

“Little.” He’d whispered back, thinking he couldn’t have his hard cock pressing against David’s ass, no matter how appealing that idea sounded in theory. He laid his head down onto his pillow and tried to control his breathing. David adjusted again, snuggling against Patrick, trying to get comfortable.

“Fuck, these beds are so small.” David cursed under his breath, and Patrick felt a shot of worry rush through him.

“I can get down…”

“No!” David had said, almost too loudly, causing Twyla to snore loudly once in reply, before evening out again into the rhythm of deep sleep. “No, stay. This ‘s nice. Stay.” David added, his words slurred a little. Patrick felt his head swirl, reminding him that they were drunk. He supposed he needed the excuse to say yes. To stay. Everything in his body was screaming for him to stay, and in the end, it was too much to say no to.
“Thanks, David.” Patrick said, adjusting a little himself now, to get comfortable. As he wiggled in place, his ass brushed up against what was undoubtedly David’s cock. It wasn’t necessarily hard, but it was prominent. And Patrick’s breath caught in his chest. David had frozen a little, the arm around Patrick’s middle gone stiff, but he hadn’t said anything. Or moved at all, actually. And fuck did Patrick want to wiggle back against him again.

But he didn’t. He had self control. He stilled his hips that ached to buck back, and focused on his breathing. In, out. In, out. David would tell if he was hyperventilating, he would feel if his heart was pounding. Eventually, the repetition of the breathing exercise, coupled with David’s warm, solid heat, had lulled Patrick to sleep.

He’d awoken in the morning, when Twyla was attempting to leave the room unnoticed. Patrick had somehow rolled onto his back, and David was draped over him, one leg sprawled across him, an arm thrown across his chest, his palm laying open, pressing against the bare skin above his heart, his head tucked into the crook of his neck and shoulder. Patrick had never wanted to be anywhere else more than in this bed, with David wrapped around him like this, right now. So he pretended not to notice, to still be asleep, and Twyla had left.

David stirred, a little, but just enough to buck his hips a little, grinding himself into Patrick, who could feel that he was a little hard. And holy fuck. Was it going to be awkward, when David woke up? Possibly. Almost certainly probably. But Goddamn, did it seem worth it to Patrick in this moment.

David had been the one to invite him to bed, after all. He’d all but insisted on it. Patrick had been drunk and high the previous night, but he was sure of that. David wouldn’t have taken no for an answer.

There was no reason he couldn’t enjoy this.

Patrick dozed back off, and awoke again to feel David stretching against him, like a cat. He yawned, loudly, before collapsing his arms back down and over Patrick, pulling him close to snuggle against him. “Mmm, morning Patrick.” He said, without a hint of shame or regret for the state that they had woken up in. Patrick knew he had woken up hard, and David probably knew as well.

And Patrick had to wonder, was it just him, or were there some serious vibes happening between them? He had assumed David would have no interest in him, in that sort of way. And Patrick
honestly didn’t have the slightest clue as to where to begin. He’d never even kissed a guy. Hell, he hadn’t even known he was into guys until six days ago, when he’d arrived for his first day of frosh week. But he was feeling things, for David Rose. Sexual things, yes, as his dick could attest to at this very moment. But also emotional things. Waking up with him, like this… it just felt right. And if he wasn’t crazy, the feeling might just be mutual.

How was he going to play this? That was the real question. He didn’t want to screw anything up. The stakes were too high. But he was already too far down the rabbit hole, not to see where it led now. He steeled himself, for the uncharted territory he was preparing to venture into.

Not now, of course. But soon. When the time was right. If the time ever felt right. He still wanted to be a little more sure about David, first. Be absolutely sure he felt the same way. That he thought this might be worth the risk.

Patrick was not a risk taker. His middle name could have been Caution, if the C hadn’t already stood for Connor. So he wasn’t really sure where to start. It had taken years of careful planning and preparation, to finally figure out how to make his last big decision. Patrick liked to plan. He was patient.

But David was making him impatient. He was making him want to throw all his carefully made plans out the window. So Patrick smiled to himself, and stretched underneath David, arching his back a little as he did, pressing himself against David. Not with his hips, but with his chest.

“Morning, sunshine.” He replied, trying to add a little of his teasing bravado to his words.

“Oh good.”

“Good?”

“It’s just I kind of thought there was an outside chance you might wake up and freak out about sleeping with me. But you seem… good.” David explained, lifting his head a little off Patrick’s shoulder to look at him closely. Patrick smiled.

“I am good. This is… good. This is fine, right?” He replied.

“Yes. Yes. It’s very fine. We are mature adults, and there was no way I was going to have let you
sleep on the floor all night. I think the last time these carpets were steam cleaned was 1974.” David said, laying his head back down, and Patrick chuckled.

They were quiet for a minute, David still turned in towards Patrick, arm around his middle, Patrick’s arm draped over his shoulders. “I actually slept pretty well.” Patrick said, after a while.

“Me too.” David replied, quietly. Neither of them moved to get up, but after a little bit, Patrick started to feel a little awkward and worried.

“If you want to sleep in, I could go back to my bed now…” He offered. He didn’t want to, but he felt he had to. David lifted his head to look at him

“No.” It wasn’t an answer to his question. It caught Patrick off guard. He hesitated, pausing for too long. The answer was no, he didn’t want to go back to his bed. But he couldn’t say that. But he couldn’t seem to make himself say the opposite, either.

“Stay.” David said, softly, after a moment, when it was clear Patrick was having a hard time answering, laying his head back down on Patrick’s shoulder, pressing his cheek against the bare skin of his upper chest. And Patrick’s stomach and chest erupted in butterflies, his cock hardened again, and he was glad he was laying down, because he thought he might swoon.

“Okay, David, I’ll stay.” He replied, his voice sounding a little hoarse in his ears, and he thought he felt David smile against his chest. It was hard, resisting the impulse to bend the few inches and press a kiss into his wild, messy hair. He shifted, to get a little more comfortable, and felt his erection brush David’s heavy down comforter. He bit back the hiss that wanted to escape him, and made sure it wasn’t pressed up against David when he settled on a position. He adjusted his arm around the hot, bare skin of David’s back and side, pulling him closer into a more comfortable position, and swallowing harshly against the rush of lust that washed over him.

Patrick had to hold it together though. If he ever wanted this to happen again (which he very much did) he had to play it cool. This was just something close friends did, that’s the vibe he was going for. Even if he had already made up his mind that he was going to try to let David know how he felt, sometime in the future. Not now, laying half naked in his bed. Now wasn’t the time. That would be aggressive and entirely uncalled for. No, for now, Patrick had to make sure this bed-sharing thing went perfectly, and David felt unthreatened and comfortable the entire time. Because fuck did Patrick want this to happen again. He would sleep like this every night, if he could.

So he controlled his breathing, he laid on his back so that his still-hard cock went nowhere near David, and kept his hands in respectable places. He did find himself slowly stroking the skin of
David’s back, however he thought there was an outside chance that could be something platonic friends did too, so he allowed himself that one thing. David didn’t seem to hate it, by the way he’d hummed in contentment, and wiggled in against him a little, cuddling in.

David fell back asleep quickly, evidenced by the way his breathing became steady, his breath coming out in hot blasts against Patrick’s skin like a sexy metronome. Patrick wanted to write a song to the rhythm. A love song, David’s song. It would be slow and delicate, but would build in intensity quickly until he’d be crying out the words, singing from his heart.

Patrick was unused to getting so carried away with himself. He’d never been like this. It was still a shock to his system, when he’d notice it happening to him. It’s like, he would be so swept away with his feelings he’d descend into these all-consuming daydreams, and then suddenly he’d take a step to the side. He’d see what he was doing, the logical part of his brain, and he’d shake his head in wonder at himself. To think that he’d been capable of such strong feelings all along, when he’d spent his entire life past adolescence thinking he was broken. Thinking feelings like this didn’t even really exist. Deluding himself, to make himself feel better about the fact that he’d never felt such a spark with anyone.

Well, he’d felt the spark now. A lot of sparks, so many that he was liable to be ignited, consumed by fire, if he didn’t let David know how he felt soon. He needed to figure out how to tell him. As soon as possible. But Patrick had to be ready, because there was no guarantee that David felt the same. There was a possibility that he would admit his feelings, and things would irrevocably change between them. It was possible. But he still had to tell him. He couldn’t keep this inside for much longer, he didn’t think.

They laid there another hour, David sleeping, Patrick laying awake with his thoughts, their bodies intertwined like lovers despite being nothing of the sort. Yet, Patrick thought. Not lovers yet.

In the end, it was Patrick’s bladder that ruined the moment. He’d needed to get up for a while but just wasn’t willing to do it, never wanting to stop touching David, having his body, his bare skin, pressing up against his own. But it never was going to last forever. He’d gotten up eventually, however reluctantly, and taken his toiletry bag with him.

Any worry that things might be awkward after sleeping together like that quickly vanished when Patrick had returned to find David lounging on his (pristinely made) bed, still shirtless but wearing his tight grey jeans with the small patches of distressing on the knees. He was wearing the thick black glasses he’d wear around the room, before or after he’d put in his contacts, and scrolling through his phone. Probably Instagram.

He looked like a painting. Or, he should be one. He made Patrick want to learn to paint.
“Oh, sorry, I got distracted. Can you wait for me? I want to go down together.” David said, looking up at him with an apologetic look on his face.

“Yeah, David, I can wait for you. I want to go down with you too.” Patrick replied, his voice a little huskier than he’d intended. The soft smile David had given him after that had made his insides squirm. “I like you in those glasses.” Patrick said, the words out before he’d even thought them. David’s smile twisted to the side and his eyes sparkled, the face he made when he was embarrassed, but very pleased.

“Maybe I’ll wear them more.” He said, smirking at Patrick a little enigmatically, and then he got up. He pulled on a white deep-v neck t-shirt and grabbed his blue zip-up “morning skin care” bag (he had different bags for different times of day, the morning bag was blue).

“Try to keep it under 10?” Patrick asked, hopeful. He was kind of starving, now that he was up.

“You know I still have to--”

“Do you hair, I know. That’s why I’m hoping you can be quick with the skin routine.” Patrick supplied, smiling kindly at David to make sure he knew he wasn’t annoyed with him. He didn’t want David to feel he was being judged for his morning routine. It wasn’t Patrick’s place to judge him, and even if it was, he wouldn’t. He liked how David looked. He liked how he took care of himself. David was different than anyone Patrick had ever met, and he wouldn’t want him to be anyone other than who he was. Because then he wouldn’t be David. And Patrick really liked David.

“‘kay, back in five.” He said, pausing at the door.

“*That* seems ambitious.” Patrick replied, teasing. David smirked.

“‘kay, back in seven.”

“Closer.”

David was gone for nine minutes, which suited Patrick just fine. It was under 10, which had been
his original request. His hair had even behaved that morning, and they were heading down to breakfast within 25, which was honestly record time.

Stevie and Twyla were waiting, and they were sitting with Ted and Miguel, and this guy Patrick thought was named Jake, all of them half-way through their saturday morning plates of french toast and eggs to order, with breakfast meats of all varieties. Patrick felt himself begin to salivate the moment he’d smelled it. There was nothing like a greasy breakfast after a night of drinking. Especially considering he was expecting to be drinking again that day.

After breakfast, they’d all gone for a walk down to the river. There were no university-planned activities that day, considering it was Saturday, so they were able to stop where they’d like, lounge around the riverbanks in the sun. It was lazy and idyllic. Despite being a week into September, it was still swelteringly hot during the day. Along the way, most of the guys had stripped their shirts, and Twyla wore just the bikini top she’d worn under her shirt, with thoughts of maybe going for a swim at some point.

David had taken his sweater off, but the white deep-v stayed on. And Patrick found himself almost weirdly happy about it. He knew what David’s body looked like. He knew what it felt like, at this point, and he liked that he didn’t have to share that with anybody, right now. It was weird and possessive, but the thought was there. And even though Ted and Miguel were basically model-hot and completely ripped (and shirtless), Patrick felt his eyes keep returning to David in that t-shirt. That fucking sexy white t-shirt.

Oh God, Patrick had it bad.

They’d smoked a joint that Stevie had supplied from seemingly nowhere in the early afternoon, sitting under the bridge by the edge of the river. Patrick’s shoes were off and his feet were in the water, and he enjoyed the heady feeling of the weed, coupled with the soothing sensations of warm air and breeze on his skin, and cool moving water on his feet. David came and sat next to him and linked their arms, eventually laying his head on Patricks shoulder.

It was a perfect day.
The perfect day bled into the perfect night. Saturday had marked the opening of the Ceile, the supposed best bar on campus, and everyone was excited. The girls had dressed up, even Stevie putting on a dramatic and attractive eye makeup, and wearing a skimpy black tank top with tight pants. She was after “randoms”, in her own words, and Patrick couldn’t have been more supportive.

David had insisted on dressing Patrick. He’d made Patrick dress and undress in front of him several times, before he’d settled on a black thin-knit v-neck sweater, over top his tightest dark-wash jeans. Patrick would have hated being dressed up like a doll, if it had been anyone other than David. If Rachel had tried, Patrick would have refused, grabbing the first shirt and pants he could find and calling it a night. But it had been exciting, and a little sexy, being under David’s scrutinous gaze like that. Hearing David say “no, take it off”, and being expected to just strip down at his very command.

It had been an effort of will power not to get hard. But there would have been no way to hide it, so he’d held back as best he could. He had almost bit a hole though the inside of his lip. But, eventually, he was dressed to David’s satisfaction. David himself was wearing black jeans that could have been painted on with a shimmery silver sweater that was deceivingly soft to the touch. He looked like a million bucks, Patrick thought dreamily.

Patrick’s perfect day continued after they’d arrived at the bar. They’d all had a couple drinks, talking out on the crowded patio, before they’d all gotten tipsy enough to want to head inside to the dance floor. Patrick had been a little hesitant, but David had grabbed his hand, and there was nowhere David could lead that Patrick wouldn’t follow. He’d trailed behind him like the puppy he was.

The dance floor was loud, and hot, and crowded. Stevie instantly left them, trolling for her “random”, and Twyla drifted away not long after, presumably for the same reason. Then it was just David and Patrick, and Patrick could not have been more okay with that. Instead of looking for other people to dance with, like maybe two platonic friends should have done, Patrick -spurred on by that last drink he’d had- tugged on David’s hand and had pulled him towards himself.

And they danced. Oh, did they dance. They danced until Patrick was breathless and sweaty, and then they danced some more. Fast song had given way to slow song, and still their attention didn’t turn from each other. At the first slow song, David had looked at Patrick nervously, but Patrick had only just smirked at him and held his arms out. David had stepped into them like he was a missing piece to his puzzle, fitting just perfectly, and all had been right with the world. At one point, David had laid his forehead against Patrick’s, and they had breathed the same air as they swayed to the music.

Patrick was pretty sure that David had felt his erection at several junctures that evening. But then again, he also kind of thought that was maybe part of the game, at this point. Because this felt like
a lead-up. The sparks were flying between them like a sparkler on Canada Day, and Patrick thought that David definitely felt the same way at this point. Their first kiss felt almost like an inevitability, at that point. The thought made him bristle with anticipation and excitement.

Patrick was feeling so good after his perfect day, that he had actually allowed himself to think all of that. The hubris of it all.

David and Patrick had danced, they’d slow danced, they’d kinda-sorta even grinded at a few moments. They smelled of one another, their bodies having spent so much time together in the tight proximity of the crowded dance floor. They’d taken a couple breaks to grab drinks, and they’d been sucked in by more than one shot-girl, but they always returned to the dance floor. After what had felt like both ages and mere minutes at once, Stevie had come to find them. Her hair was messy, her eye makeup a little smudged, and she seemed very happy.

“You guys ready to go?” She’d yelled at them in question over the pounding music.

“Sure, where’s Twyla?” David had asked back, and Patrick felt as his hand found his own, and he tugged it around his waist. Patrick was a little taken aback, but entirely willing to put his hands on David’s body again, so he happily obliged him, wrapping his arm around his side. It felt like something easy that a couple would do. He liked it.

As if to punctuate that thought, some drunk girl walking by with a group of friends grabbed Patrick’s arm and leaned into his space, shouting “you guys are such a cute couple!” over the music. She’d grinned at him and David, before disappearing into the crowd. Patrick was a little shocked and if he wasn’t lying, pleased, and he was feeling too good to feel self conscious about her remark, so when David had leaned close to Patrick’s ear and asked ‘what’d she say!?’, Patrick had just smiled back at him and answered with the truth.

“She thinks we make a cute couple.” Patrick explained loudly, and laughed at the appraising look that went over David’s face before he nodded satisfactorily, a little haughty.

“Well, she thinks right. We are adorable.”

“The cutest.” Patrick agreed, his words freer from the alcohol. David grinned at him, and Patrick grinned back.

“If you two are done eye-fucking each other, can we please get out of here?” Stevie had asked, and
only then did Patrick realize he’d been staring into David’s eyes. He pulled them away, guiltily before snarking back.

“Only if you’re done actually -fucking your random.” He replied, and Stevie gave him a begrudging laugh and warning point with her finger.

“All done.” She answered, and they’d laughed.

Stevie explained that Twyla had gotten sucked into another social circle’s grouping, and was currently under the arm of a very handsome dark haired lumberjack, from the look of him. He looked like the kind of guy that belonged on the front of a paper towel roll. Good for Twy, Patrick had thought, as he’d left the bar with his arm slung around David’s shoulder. When they’d gotten back to the room, David and Patrick had quickly brushed their teeth, utterly exhausted from their day in the sun followed by drinking and dancing. Then they’d stripped down to their underwear without even a moment’s hesitation, and gotten into bed. It was with a pang of longing that Patrick had slid into his own bed, across the room from David. It might as well be across a chasm, from his perspective. Patrick wanted nothing more than to be in David’s arms again as he drifted off to sleep.

Last night had been a pretty perfect night, but today had been an absolutely perfect day. From the moment he woke up until now, as he fell asleep. Pure perfection. Patrick was reflecting on that fact, as he felt himself slowly sinking into the bed, falling asleep. The day was over. It had ended, and nothing bad had happened. This was the best day of Patrick’s life.

And all at once, there was a knocking at the door.

Patrick had almost jumped to his feet, excited to answer. Maybe it was Twyla again, or Stevie, needing to sleep over because their room was in “use”. He didn’t even bother putting on a t-shirt before he hastily slid open the lock and opened the door.

All at once, it was like being plunged into the cold dark ocean. Icy saltwater shot through his veins, and his stomach dropped to his feet. It was not Twyla or Stevie.

“Patrick… hi.” The cute redhead said, waving weakly and smiling crookedly.
“Rachel--” Patrick said dumbly, his mind racing, visions of David flashing through his mind, panic causing his heart to race. “Rachel what are you doing here?”

To be continued...

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh!!! Please let me know your thoughts!!! I promise an update will come soon! Lol

EDIT: I missed most of you by forgetting to do this, but please allow me to shamelessly plug the event me and my friend are running for the schitts creek fandom! It's called Open Fic Night and there is a fic exchange, solo fic entries, art and videos. The fic exchange is being run through Ao3 and registration closes on Monday April 29! New writers welcome! Go sign up :)

https://archiveofourown.org/collections/openficnight2019
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Just as things were reaching a fever pitch and it seemed like it was inevitable for David and Patrick to take things to the next level, Rachel shows up to throw a wrench into their plans.

Drama ensues.

***No Davids or Patricks were harmed in the making of this fic.

Chapter Notes

Ok guys. There's angst. But I would never keep them apart for TOO long so stick with me and enjoy a delicious serving of misunderstanding-fueled angst.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rachel? Who the hell was Rachel? David didn’t know why, but his heart began to beat faster. He didn’t think they had a Rachel in residence, or that he’d met a single one since coming to school. His mind raced, but came up blank. If there was a Rachel, they certainly didn’t know her well enough for her to be showing up at their room in the middle of the night. David couldn’t help it, he had a bad feeling about this.

"Patrick, I had to come see you--" The girl - Rachel - said. David’s head swam, exhausted from dancing and still very drunk, but he tried to focus. He didn’t want to miss a word.

"You shouldn’t be here.” Patrick replied. He sounded wrecked. He was wrecked, David knew. He was as drunk and tired as David was. But it was more than that. David felt his heart beat impossibly faster, and strained his ears to hear over the sound of his own pounding pulse.

"You wouldn’t return my texts, I had to come. Patrick this is stupid, I told you I’m okay with long distance. We shouldn’t be apart like this, not talking. I came here to fix it.”

"Fix it? You can’t-- Rach, I told you--” Patrick sounded exhausted and desperate, to David’s ears. But he couldn’t bring himself to feel much sympathy for Patrick, because all his mind wanted to do was replay the way he’d said ‘ Rach’, so intimate and familiar, over and over again in his head. Patrick and David had spent almost every minute of the last week together, much of that time spent in each other’s arms. They’d shared intimate details of their lives with each other. And
Patrick had never mentioned anything about someone named Rachel. But it was clear these two knew each other, and very well, for that matter.

“Yeah but you didn’t mean it. I know you didn’t.” David was frozen in place. He wanted to disappear. To sink into the mattress, and then through the floor, and then right into the center of the Earth. But he couldn’t, and so he lay there, wide eyed and frozen, staring at the door, and the side of Patrick, partially visible and lit from the front where he stood holding it open, blocking the entranceway. He watched as Patrick ran his hand through his hair and attempted to tug at the short strands at the back of his neck.

“Yes, Rach, I did…” He said, but he didn’t say it with enough conviction for David’s liking. He just sounded tired.

“That’s what you always say, and then you always want to get back together. So I’m saving you the trouble. This is stupid, we didn’t even break up because of a fight this time. We broke up because you were leaving, and you thought it would be too hard, but like I said, I’m okay with long distance! We can skype, or facetime, I could visit you on weekends. There are ways to make it work.”

David’s insides had gone cold. He felt so confused, and as a result of that he felt stupid, and he hated feeling stupid. David and Patrick had talked so much over the past week, shared so much, he thought he knew almost all there was to know about his life in Thunder Bay. About his friends, and family, his baseball and hockey teams, his embarrassing and cringey sounding open mic nights at the local cafe. Everything, he thought. But apparently there was a lot that Patrick hadn’t been telling David, and now he was wondering how well he really knew his roommate, after all. And that felt terrible.

And from the sounds of it, this wasn’t some minor girlfriend. And it hadn’t been over for long. Potentially they were together as recently as last week. Patrick broke up with her to go to University. And now she was here, telling him she was okay with long distance, and would visit him on weekends, and… he wanted to be sick. Suddenly the alcohol seemed to sour in his stomach, and the spinning in his head became increasingly unpleasant and nauseating. But Patrick was in the way, blocking his exit. More than Patrick. Rachel too. He felt even sicker.

Patrick had frozen, clammed up. He wasn’t replying. He just stood there, blocking the doorway, lit from the front by the glow of the hallway. “Well, are you going to invite me in?” Rachel asked, when Patrick had taken too long. And David swallowed hard against the sickness rising in his throat.

“Umm,” Patrick replied, and then turned his head to look directly at David. When their eyes met, it was like an electric shock to David’s heart. But not in a good way, this time… Patrick’s eyes
were sad, full of regret and worry. But they were resigned. They were saying ‘I’m sorry’, and David thought he knew what for. And even if his body refused to sink to the center of the earth, he was pretty sure his heart had found a way.

Patrick was going to say yes, he was going to invite her in. What other choice did he have? It was the middle of the night, she had nowhere else to go. But still, David wanted him to say no. To tell her to go find a fucking Motel 6 or Holiday Inn, or some shit. But Patrick wasn’t going to do that. David had already seen it in his eyes. “Yeah, sure, Rachel.” But he didn’t move out of her way. Instead, he looked back at David again, something inscrutable in his eyes. And if David wasn’t feeling so hurt and blindsided (and if he was being honest, betrayed) at that moment, he might have recognized it as longing. Then he turned back to her again, stepped back and opened the door wider. “Come in.”

Rachel stepped into the room. The first thing David noticed, when she stepped inside, was that she was thin, and short, and very cute. She had long silky looking auburn hair, and she wore a white spaghetti strapped tank top underneath an oversized zip-up blue hoodie that David had a sinking feeling probably belonged to Patrick. She carried a backpack over one shoulder.

David wanted to shut his eyes and pretend he was sleeping, pretend he’d never seen her, but he couldn’t do that. Besides, Patrick was already gesturing to David’s side of the room with his arm. “I have a roommate, Rachel. And we were both just getting to sleep, so I’ll properly introduce you in the morning. But that’s David.” Patrick said, his voice tight despite the loosening effect of all the alcohol he’d had that night. Then he paused a beat, and seemed to swallow harshly, before continuing. “David, this is Rachel.”

David didn’t want to reply. He didn’t want to acknowledge that this scene was even real. For some reason, it felt like if he heard his own voice, it would force him to admit that this wasn’t really just some bad dream. He didn’t want to speak. He didn’t want it to be real.

But then Rachel spoke, and David didn’t have a choice. “Hey, David. I’m sorry about this, it was kind of a spur of the moment thing, I got here way later than I thought. It’s nice to meet you.” She said, and she sounded so sweet and apologetic and genuine. David hated her. He hated himself for caring so much about Patrick already. He’d been telling himself all week to rein it in, to guard his heart against exactly this sort of thing that he’d known would be coming. But he’d gone and fallen for Patrick against all of his better instincts.

That’s why they were called better instincts. Because they knew better than you. He should have listened. He shouldn’t have let himself fall for an obviously straight guy. Patrick had worn cargo shorts on the first day they’d met. That should have been all David needed to know to stay away. He hadn’t been hiding who he was. What had David been thinking? There was never any hope for them, beyond maybe a frosh week “my first” gay experiment. Patrick was straight. He had a girlfriend. And now Rachel was speaking to David. And he had to say something.
“Hi.” He croaked, and that was it. That was all he could get out. It was enough. It was better than nothing, which was what he had wanted to say. It was fine. Patrick looked at David, his expression broken and lost. But David didn’t care. Patrick had basically lied to him all week. And okay, maybe he wasn’t technically lying, but he was leaving out very important things about himself. And it didn’t even matter, because David knew where this was going. They were going to get back together. Whatever he had thought might be starting, might have been sparking, between he and Patrick, was over. Or it had never really been.

Maybe he had been reading into it wrong the entire time? David had been so sure that Patrick liked him back. It had taken him the better part of the week to believe it, and today had cemented it. It was the way they’d danced together, that finally made David sure. The way Patrick’s hands had roamed, uninhibited, encouraged his body closer, spurred on by the thumping basslines and numerous drinks lowering his inhibitions. They’d shared something intimate tonight, even if they hadn’t kissed. And the only reason they hadn’t kissed, was because David had decided their first kiss should be somewhere more special. Not a drunken nightclub dance floor makeout. That wasn’t good enough for them.

David wished he’d taken his shot while he still had the opportunity. He had thought he’d have more time. Although, maybe he never had any time to begin with. Maybe he’d been reading the signs wrong, and Patrick would have rejected him if he’d leaned in for the kiss he’d so desperately wanted. It wasn’t like they’d crossed any platonic boundaries they couldn’t come back from. They had maybe been straddling the line a little, but hadn’t crossed it. Patrick could just be a flirty guy. Maybe David had it all wrong.

He obviously had it all wrong.

“You take my bed, I’ll sleep on the floor.” Patrick said, and David felt relief wash through him like a wave of morphine hitting his bloodstream. But it was short lived.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Patty, we can share.” She replied. Patty. Patty. We can share. David wanted to bury his face into his pillow, but he forced himself to look normal.

“No, Rach, I don’t think that’s a good idea…” Patrick replied, but he sounded weak, irresolute. He was going to give in. David knew it.

“I’m not going to let you sleep on the floor all night.” She pressed. Then why don’t *you* sleep on the floor then? David thought, bitterly.
“I can sleep with David…” Patrick tried, and David’s very soul wanted to spring out of his body in hopeful excitement, but his brain knew better. This was the least confident, least assertive, that David had ever heard Patrick. He was putty in Rachel’s hands.

“Okay now you’re just being insane. We’ll sleep together, that’s that. Honestly, Patty, what is the big deal? We’ve slept together before, lots of times. We’ve done a lot more than sleep—”

“Rach.” Patrick said in warning, cutting her off. David was grateful. He didn’t want to hear what kinds of things Patrick had been doing in bed with her, besides sleeping. Although he had a pretty good idea.

“Don’t worry, David.” Great, she was addressing David now. Why did spontaneous human combustion have to be so spontaneous? What David wouldn’t give to burst into flames at that very moment. “we’ll be good and won’t bother you at all. We can keep our hands to ourselves for one night, right Pat?”

David didn’t want to, but he couldn’t help but look to Patrick for his response. He seemed completely dazed, and once again he wasn’t replying quickly enough when spoken to. This wasn’t the Patrick David knew. This was post-lobotomy Jack Nicholson in Cuckoo’s Nest. His mouth hung open, his eyes were open but unseeing, and he clearly had either not heard Rachel, or simply not comprehended what she had said to him.

“Pat?” She repeated, and nudge him. “Right?”

“What? Sorry, I was-- I think I’m still drunk.” Patrick said, and David thought that was an excuse.

“You don’t mind, right David? I promise we’ll be good, we won’t make it awkward.” She was addressing David directly again, and he was even less happy with it this time than the last. She wanted his permission? What would happen if he said no? And all he could think was, bitch you already made it awkward. But he knew there was only one socially acceptable answer to give her, so he swallowed back the bile rising in his throat and forced his head to nod.

“Um, you can do whatever you want.” He said, and found that his mouth was very dry, so he swallowed harshly. “Doesn’t bother me.” He added, because he really, really wanted to try to act cool about this. He didn’t want to show how much he was hurting. He wanted to appear nonchalant, even if he was being ripped apart on the inside. And there, he’d said it. He tried to look at a neutral spot on Rachel’s chin, not quite able to make himself look at her eyes. But he couldn’t help his gaze from shifting to Patrick.
Had he ever seen such a genuine look of anguish on anyone in real life? David’s roommate looked like a character from a fucking telenovela, with the exaggerated unbridled facial expression he was projecting. But David was unmoved. He was already starting to feel numb inside, the shock of the situation finally settling in, as he saw Rachel moving in his periphery. She was taking off her (Patrick’s) hoodie, and tying her hair into a loose knot on the top of her head. Getting ready for bed.

But Patrick remained frozen, looking at David. Apologizing with his eyes. But David didn’t want to hear it. See it. Whatever. He didn’t care.

Well, of course he fucking cared. He cared too much, that was the entire problem. But he was suddenly resolutely determined to stop caring. Starting now. So he rolled away from Patrick, leaving that hangdog expression in his past, but knowing he’d be seeing it when he closed his eyes for a long time to come.

David pressed his eyes closed harder than was necessary, and prayed for sleep. He was drunk and exhausted, surely he could pass out any second? But he didn’t. And he could close his eyes, but he couldn’t close his ears. So he heard, as Patrick finally started to move. “I’m going to get a t-shirt and some pants.” He said, and David tried not to have feelings about that. Not to place hope on what those words could or could not mean.

“No, it’s fine. We’ve slept togeth-“

“I’m gonna get a t-shirt and some pants.” Patrick repeated, more forcefully this time, cutting Rachel off. David heard some sounds then that he thought was Patrick opening his drawer and digging out his clothes, and David couldn’t help it. He felt a spark of hope. A God-awful, terrible-idea of a spark of hope.

Leia was wrong. Hope was not like the sun. It was like the wind. Sometimes blowing through at a manageable breeze, but sometimes crashing through your life like a hurricane, breaking down walls, and upturning tables (and plans, and intentions) leaving damage and destruction in its wake before it blew itself out and disappeared entirely. Leaving you with the damage to clean up.

David was going to have a lot of damage to clean up when this all blew over. Hope sucked, because all it did was lift you up so you had further to fall. And yet here David was, reading into Patrick’s decision to cover up for Rachel, despite having slept with him skin to skin the night before. Could he possibly maybe be done with her after all? Was there still a chance for them?
David didn’t know what to think. His head hurt, he was dizzy and sick feeling, and his mind would not stop racing. Flashes of the past day and week kept coming back to him. Patrick moving his hips and grinding into him, drunk and sweaty on the dance floor. David and Patrick holding hands. Spooning the night before, his arm holding Patrick closely. Laughter, and private whispers, and so much eye contact.

And then he remembered that despite all that, Patrick had been hiding a major part of himself the entire time. He had let David think that there was nothing more to know, that he’d been single. And somehow it just felt like a lie, and David didn’t know why Patrick would have done that. What would it have mattered, that he had a girlfriend and they broke up? David had lots of people in his past, and Patrick knew it. What reason could he possibly have to justify keeping her a secret? The only thing David could think of, was that it wasn’t fully over.

David’s heart continued to sink further and further into the molten core of the Earth as he laid there, facing the wall, his back to Patrick and Rachel. Sleep was not coming easy. He had his blanket pulled right up to his neck, and he’d tucked it in on either side of him like a cocoon. It was mostly because he was feeling very vulnerable, sleeping shirtless with a stranger in the room, but he found there was a certain calming effect to being bundled up, almost like a swaddled baby.

After a long time, David’s right arm began to ache. He didn’t like sleeping on this side, he never had, it didn’t feel natural for some reason. Like trying to write with his left hand. He was pretty sure that Patrick and Rachel had been asleep for a while now. He could hear their even breathing, and they hadn’t stirred in a while. David thought it might be safe to turn over, and hoped that maybe that would be the key to finally falling asleep himself.

As quietly and carefully as he was able, he rolled over, not wanting to cause his bed to creak and wake either of the others up. Eventually, he was settled on his left side, and it was much more comfortable. But now he was facing towards Patrick’s bed, and David couldn’t help but looking over at him. Their room was dark, and the night was cloudy, so there wasn’t much light to see by, but David’s eyes had become very accustomed to the dark after laying awake for so long. He could make out the form of Patrick, laying closest to the door, his back to Rachel, facing towards David.

David just laid there and stared for a while, letting out a longing sigh he had meant to be more internal than external. It wasn’t for a while that David finally realized that Patrick was staring back at him. He’d been so cloaked in shadow, David hadn’t been able to see. But a cloud must have passed the moon or something because the room brightened just a bit, and then there was no mistaking it. They were laying there, in silence, just looking at each other.

Patrick’s eyes were sad, and tired. David expected that his might look the same. He started to feel that tugging at his heart again, as they looked into each other’s eyes, the one that urged him to tear his walls down and let himself fall in love. But then he had a thought, and wondered where Rachel’s hands were, and an icy feeling of jealousy and bitterness washed through him, and the
tugging at his heart was gone. David closed his eyes, and shut Patrick out. And eventually, he slept.

The next morning, David woke up earlier than he ever had since coming to school. He had laid there, upon first waking, with his eyes closed for a minute, afraid to open them. He was half hoping that the horror show from the previous night was just a nightmare. But no, it had been very, very real. And now David had to figure out how to sneak out of bed and grab his clothes before Patrick or Rachel woke up.

He had almost succeeded, but he’d bumped one of his facemasks over when he’d grabbed his shower caddy, and on reflex looked over to Patrick’s bed to see if he’d woken them. He had. Patrick was laying there, sleepy eyes cracked open. They looked red, and he had bags under them. It was not a cute look for him. He still looked devastatingly handsome.

Their eyes remained locked for a long beat, Patrick’s sad eyes seemingly beseeching him of something, before he whispered “hey”, and the corner of his mouth quirked up in a melancholy smile. David just looked at him, shocked and unsure how to respond. He held his gaze for a long moment before he once again sighed, and then turned to leave without replying.

Maybe he was being dramatic. Maybe he was being unfair. David didn’t care. He almost ran down the hall, to get away from him, and locked himself into the first open shower room he could find. Turning the hot water up to a point where he could hardly stand it, David stood under the stream and tried to sear it out of his memory. Somehow cleanse his body from the dirtiness that was this whole situation.

Eventually, he emerged, but he didn’t go back to his room. Instead, he knocked on Stevie and Twyla’s door, quietly but insistently, until eventually a very disheveled looking Stevie opened up. “Can I get ready for breakfast with you guys?” David asked, and he wondered if his voice sounded funny to them too. It must have, because the look of concern Stevie gave him was very uncharacteristic of her. David might not have known her facial muscles were capable of expressing such genuine human emotions, before now. It was nice to know she cared.

“What happened?”
“I’ll tell you all about it, just let me in and close the door. Quietly.” David replied, whispering, knowing he was right across the hall from his own room and Patrick would hear him if he was loud. The last thing he wanted was for Patrick to come out and find him right now. David needed some space to process everything that had happened. He didn’t need Patrick right now He needed Stevie. And Twyla too.

“Sure, sure. Come in.” Stevie said, stepping out of his way, and David rushed inside.

“Can I use your mirror? I have to do my hair before it dries.” He asked, before getting bombarded with questions. Because the world could be collapsing around him, but David would still want to have perfect hair. Sue him for liking to look good.

“You can use mine, David. I’ve got a hair and makeup station at the desk.” Twyla said, her voice unnaturally bright and cheery for just having been woken up from what was probably a deep sleep. Stevie looked suitably destroyed, but Twyla was like Snow White or Cinderella, or something. When they’d first met, David had expected to be constantly annoyed by her optimism and chipper attitude, but he was quickly finding that he appreciated her greatly for it. She was a breath of fresh air when he needed it, and even when the things she said were completely insane half the time, she made him laugh.

“Thanks Twy. My hair gets very frizzy when I’m stressed, so I think it’s going to need extra attention today.” He said, settling down on the chair in front of the mirror, and flicking on the lamp next to it.

“You wanna tell us about it, big guy?” Stevie asked, and David turned to look at her, His face twisted with horrified disgust.

“Big guy? Okay, no more hanging out with Ted for you.” He replied, and she smirked. David narrowed his eyes in response, seeing that she’d said it to get a rise out of him. He seemed to fall into her traps every single time, he wondered if he’d ever learn.

An hour later, they were all ready for breakfast, and David had told Stevie and Twyla everything. They were satisfactorily shocked and sympathetic to David, so he felt a little better. He thought that if it came to it, he was going to get the kids in the divorce. Which was good, because he was going to need them, if he didn’t have Patrick anymore. He didn’t know what he’d do if he lost Patrick, and then if all of his friends ended up taking his side instead of David’s? He’d probably have to drop out.
They headed down together, right as breakfast service was beginning. David had never been to breakfast so early, he usually made it right before they closed it to start preparing lunch, so he’d never seen the selection of food so hot and so fresh. His mouth began to water as he slid his tray down the line, saying please and thank you to the lady in the hair net as he asked her for a scoop or serving of every single thing they had to offer.

“And can I please get extra hash browns?” He asked, hopefully.

“Only one scoop each, hun.” She’d said, and he scrunched his face in consternation.

“Okay, but I’ve just had my heart broken today, and I really feel like some deep fried potatoes could help ease that pain?” He replied, and she stared at him for a minute before smiling.

“I’m sorry sweetheart, that sounds rough. Here’s an extra scoop but don’t tell anyone I gave it to you, okay?”

“I’ll take it to my grave.” He replied, and she winked at him.

Back at the table, David dove into his plate with a vigour and enthusiasm that only exhaustion and severe stress could accomplish. If shame eating was an Olympic Sport, David would be Michael fucking Phelps.

Things were okay, for a while. Stevie and Twyla were there, and the three of them started talking about the Trailer Park Boys, somehow, and whether they were genius or trashy. David had allowed himself to forget, for a minute, about his troubles.

And that was the exact minute that Patrick and Rachel chose to show up at breakfast.

“David, hey!” Rachel called, waving over at him excitedly like they were old friends or something. He knew his expression must have been something to behold, as he felt his eyes go wide and his mouth twist into a grimace. Patrick’s shoulders had gone up almost to his ears, and he looked about as uncomfortable as David had ever seen him. Good, he thought. If David had to be uncomfortable, it was only fair that Patrick was too.

She pulled Patrick by the arm to move faster, and David turned around in his chair and had a panicked non-verbal eye conversation with Stevie. She reached out and put her hand over his hand.
“You can do this.” She whispered, and then Rachel and Patrick were arriving at the table.

“David, you ran off so early this morning, we didn’t get a chance to get to know each other! I want to know all about my Patty’s roommate.”

“Rach, I’m not--” Patrick weakly argued, but that’s just what it was. Weak. He was so meek that Rachel interrupted him, speaking right over top of him, her attention now turned to Twyla and Stevie.

“And you must be Patrick and David’s friends?” She asked, her voice now a saccharine sweet, a different tone than she’d used when speaking to him. She also gripped Patrick’s arm a bit tighter, more possessively. Like she was jealous of the girls, but wasn’t threatened at all by David. It somehow made him feel even worse, if that was possible.

Patrick made another weak attempt at shrugging her off his arm, but ultimately gave up when she didn’t comply, and allowed her to link hers around his, pulling him tight to her side. He sighed and then forced a smile onto his face. “Hey guys, this is Rachel. Rach, this is Twyla and Stevie, and you met David.” Patrick paused, and his eyes swept over Twyla’s and Stevie’s making contact with each before landing on David’s. “Rachel is my, uh, we were--”

“I’m his girlfriend.” Rachel supplied. Stevie’s eyebrows shot up dramatically, looking at Patrick quizzically. David didn’t want to look at either of them, but as they were standing right across from him, it was hard not to without being awkward.

“Are you now?” Stevie asked, directing her words to Rachel but looking directly at Patrick with wide faux-guileless eyes.

“No, we, uh, we--” Patrick stammered, and Rachel rolled her eyes and laughed, pulling him closer and leaning her head against his shoulder.

“Okay, well we aren’t officially back together yet, but--”

“Let’s get some food.” Patrick interrupted. “We’ll meet you guys back here, eh?” He asked, looking at David as he spoke. Almost like he was asking permission. David was still reeling from the shock of hearing I’m his girlfriend, and all of his faculties were currently working towards keeping his ever loving shit together in the moment, and he had never wanted to project nonchalance more before in his entire life. So he replied with a shrug, and then turned his focus
toward Stevie, who was sitting opposite him at the table.

In his periphery, David could tell that Patrick had stood there a moment, seemingly lost, but had eventually went off with Rachel to get their breakfast. When he knew he was gone, David let out a huge breath and sagged onto the table. “Kill me.” He groaned.

“I didn’t like her. She was too nice. I don’t trust her.” Said Twyla, startling a laugh out of David, because he had never met anyone sweeter and nicer than Twyla. But he appreciated her allegiance.

“She had stupid ears.” Stevie said, making David laugh again, and he sniffed back a tear that had wanted to fall. Together, Twyla and Stevie got David back to himself enough by the time Patrick and Rachel returned that he didn’t have to run away and bury his head in the ground in shame.

The rest of breakfast was awful. Rachel was by all accounts a lovely girl, and in any other circumstance David might have liked her. But he had never before had to endure something so truly torturous as this meal with Patrick and his maybe-girlfriend after the evening the two of them had shared the previous night. It didn’t help that Rachel was clearly jealous and insecure of Stevie and Twyla and how honestly stunning they were, so she was doing everything but pee on Patrick, to claim him as her own in front of them.

Patrick seemed like he also wanted the Earth to swallow him whole, but David assumed that was just because he was upset he was caught. He had wanted to have his cake and eat it too. He’d wanted a fling with David (maybe… David still wasn’t 100% sure it was anything more than friendship) but he didn’t want to fully cut ties with his ex. He’d kept her on his line, clearly, for many years now apparently. Breaking up with her only to get back together with her an hour or day or week or month later. But according to Rachel, they always got back together.

So excuse David for not giving one shit about how Patrick was feeling at the moment.

Eventually, Ted and Miguel had shown up, and David was already done his second helping, and was ready to leave. Besides, he didn’t think he could stand hearing Rachel introduce herself as Patrick’s girlfriend again, so he stopped Ted from grabbing a chair from a nearby table and offered his own.

“No, Ted, take mine. I’m done. I think I’m going to go make sure I have everything ready for classes tomorrow. I’ll, um, see you guys… later.” He said, getting to his feet and gesturing for Ted to sit down.
“Thanks, big guy. See you at lunch?”

“If I ever miss a meal, please come check on me, it probably means I’m dead.” David replied, then he sort of looked around the table to indicate he was talking to everyone. “Okay, um, well. Text me if something happens, I guess.”

“We definitely will, David.” Twyla said, and there was too much sympathy in her voice, so David shot her a bit of evil eye to get her to tone it down. He didn’t want Patrick to know he’d talked to them about him.

“So, bye.” He said, turning to leave, walking quickly to put distance between himself and that whole situation. He felt better the further away he got. He had to stop himself from running the rest of the way to his room, after he left Patrick and Rachel’s sight. When he finally got there, he shut the door behind him, locked it, and then slid down it to sit against it on the floor, his elbows leaning on his knees and his face in his hands. He breathed deeply, trying to center himself. In, out. In, out. He could do this. He wasn’t going to pull a David and do something rash that he would later regret.

He could do this. He could control himself. He wasn’t going to let himself go off the rails this time. He could do this.

Had anyone in the world ever felt like a bigger piece of shit than Patrick did right now? He wasn’t sure. It was like he was living a waking nightmare, and there was no escape. It was a never-ending car crash, a train wreck that just kept going. Patrick had never been more mad at anyone in his life than he was with Rachel right now. But he had to keep it in. He couldn’t be an asshole to her. Besides, a part of him knew it was his own fault. He could have stopped this. He should have stopped this. He could have stopped it. He let everything get completely fucked up.

Honestly, he deserved it.

He truly believed he’d brought on all the pain and misery he was experiencing presently, but he also knew that David didn’t. David didn’t deserve anything but the very best, from anyone. Patrick knew, from talking with him this past week, that David had been hurt before. People had used him. If emotional pain left scars, from the sounds of it he’d probably look like Freddy Krueger. Patrick never wanted to hurt David. He hated himself for it.
And beyond hating himself, he was so incredibly disappointed. It was childish and selfish, but he felt this profound sense of loss, almost felt like he went downstairs on Christmas morning and found that Santa had skipped his house that year. The sense of anticipation and tension between he and David had hit a fever pitch the previous night. Patrick felt it, and he knew David had felt it. Kissing David had almost felt inevitable, and his entire body had been vibrating with need and excitement for it.

And now, it was as if the rug had been pulled right out from under him. It all felt impossible now. Ruined. He had ruined it. Rachel had ruined it. David could barely look at him, everything they’d shared, all of their intimacy, was gone like a puff of smoke. Patrick could see it in David’s expression, his posture, his tone. He was done. Done. Patrick had ruined his chance. At this point, his only hope was to try to salvage a friendship out of this, and he wasn’t even sure how much of a shot he had at that either. At the very least, he hoped they’d be able to remain civil, as they shared a room together.

Patrick felt a sob rise from his chest and he swallowed it down at the thought of sharing a room with David but not being friends. At the very least he needed to be friends. However desperate for more he was. And he was very desperate for more. If he didn’t know it was way too soon and super melodramatic, he could have sworn he was falling in love with David. But even if it wasn’t love, it was powerful. And he had ruined it all by sleeping with Rachel, and letting her call herself his girlfriend in front of David.

David... Patrick had only known him a week, and that was admittedly not a very long time. But in that short time, he had never seen him look so hurt. Patrick took this to mean that his romantic feelings had been reciprocated, which in any other circumstance would have made him ecstatic. Except 12 hours could make all the difference in the world, and David probably hated him now.

Patrick poked at his food miserably, not able to stomach the idea of eating, but forcing himself to take intermittent bites of his scrambled eggs. They’d gotten cold and were slimy and gross. He hadn’t seasoned them at all. Somehow, it had felt like salt and ketchup or hot sauce were for people who hadn’t just destroyed the feelings of the person they cared about most.

All the while, Rachel was talking animatedly with Ted and Miguel, sort of leaving the girls out after the guys had gotten there. Rachel had always sort of been like that, drawn to guys. Patrick also got the distinct impression that she was jealous of the girls. The thought was laughable, because if only she knew...

Patrick probably shouldn’t zone out like he was doing. It was dangerous to let Rachel talk unsupervised with his friends, who knew what she could be telling them. He tried to bring his mind back into the present, looking up from his plate and focusing to clear the fog from his brain. And
Rachel was setting a narrative about their relationship that he didn’t want told. But the train had left the station. What was he supposed to do now? He would just have to have a private conversation with Rachel, break up with her for good, and send her home. Then he would prove to his friends with actions rather than words that he and Rachel weren’t really back together.

“...yeah, Patrick thought the distance would be too hard, but then I was talking with my friend Ashley, and her boyfriend moved to Vancouver for school last year, and they’re still together, so I figured why can’t we make it work too? So I got in my car, and drove straight here.” She said, and Patrick stifled a scream.

“Aww, that’s so romantic!” Ted said, and Patrick may have actually rolled his eyes, although he hoped he didn’t. He wanted to cut Rachel off, to clarify to everyone that she was wrong. That wasn’t the only reason he’d broken up with her, it was just the excuse he had used. But he couldn’t do that to Rachel in front of everyone. That conversation had to be private. So he dropped his eyes back to his plate and speared another disgusting bite of scrambled egg onto his fork, wishing for the ability to disappear into thin air.

“Yeah, that’s just how we sort of do it. We may lose our way sometimes, but we always find the way back to each other eventually.” She said, and she was smiling so fondly at Patrick, with so much love, it momentarily made his heart break. He was going to hurt more than just David today. “Right Patty?” She asked, and suddenly the affection he was feeling for her was washed away with an anger for her bringing him into this. He had resolved himself not to disagree with her in front of his friends, but he didn’t want to participate in the charade.

“In the past, yeah. That’s how it’s always gone.” He answered, trying not to get pinned into any corners with his response. He wasn’t agreeing with her. But he wasn’t disagreeing either. He needed to have that conversation with her. As soon as possible. He started making a plan. He’d take her downtown, away from campus, for lunch. He wanted to have this conversation far away from everyone else, and preferably in a public place. He didn’t know if that was a dick move, or a cop-out. But he didn’t want her to try to lure him back, like she always did. With tears, or faking the need for a hug, and then turning it into a kiss. She had a whole playbook of moves.

He needed this to be a clean break, and completely unambiguous. He had thought he’d already accomplished that, but apparently he hadn’t been clear enough. He was paying for that now, in a major way. Karma was a bitch. And it would get him even harder if he didn’t do this the right way today.

“Yeah, well, history has a way of repeating itself.” Rachel replied brightly, completely oblivious to the death stares she was receiving from Stevie and Twyla. Patrick wasn’t oblivious, though. Stevie
and Twyla had finished their food ages ago, but they’d stuck around. Probably to keep an eye on Rachel. They weren’t dumb. They’d known there was something happening between him and David. They may have even been rooting for it, by the way Stevie teased them.

Poor Rachel. She had no idea how unwelcome she was (by everyone except a very clueless Ted, maybe). Rachel thought this was just another one of their breakups, and that they’d get back together. She thought Patrick’s friends would soon become her friends, as she came to visit on weekends. She had no idea they weren’t on her side.

A few minutes later, they all decided it was time to clear out, so they took their trays over to the racks, and Ted tried to confirm plans to meet for lunch. “Actually, I think I’m going to take Rachel out for lunch, somewhere downtown maybe.” Patrick replied, trying to ignore the way that Rachel practically glowed at this news. Stevie and Twyla exchanged a look that wasn’t lost on Patrick, but he forced himself not to spiral.

He wouldn’t have time to explain everything to them beforehand, not with Rachel around, so he’d just have to hope that nothing else disastrous happened between now and this afternoon, when he could tell them he’d ended it for good. And clarify that they had already been officially broken up… Patrick wasn’t cheating, when he was flirting with David. He wanted them to know that. Even if Rachel thought that they could get back together, he had still broken up with her.

Not wanting to go anywhere near his room right now, Patrick decided to stall for time before lunch by taking Rachel for a tour of the campus. Trent was huge, when you counted all the natural space and paths you could walk around. There was the path through the drumlin, or walking down by the river, or up into the nature preserve. He could pass hours that way if he wanted to. And he sort of did. He wanted to keep moving, and didn’t want to stop to give her the chance to pin him down.

Around two hours later, Patrick agreed to return back to the dorm with Rachel, to get ready to leave for downtown. She needed to get her purse, which she left in the room, and wanted to touch up her hair and makeup, because Patrick had told her he would take her to a sit-down restaurant where she could order off a menu. He knew she thought this was a date. He felt pretty terrible. But what else was he supposed to do? Was there a nice way to break someone’s heart?

They’d walked around almost every inch of the campus property, and talked the whole time. Patrick had shoved his hands in his pockets, because Rachel kept trying to hold his, but other than that, it had actually been a sort of nice time. If it wasn’t for the pervasive feeling of regret and dread ruining everything, he would have had a very nice morning. He really did love Rachel. Just… not in nearly the right sort of way. She was kind, and smart (even if she was completely
oblivious when it came to love, apparently), and generous. She wasn’t funny like David was, but she had a good sense of humour. She was the perfect girl… for someone else.

He thought that maybe the only way to get her to truly understand that things were done, so that she could move on like she so truly deserved to, was to tell her the truth. He was gay. He hadn’t meant to lie to her, he hadn’t even known it himself before this week. But now he knew. He was gay. Patrick Brewer was a gay man.

It still felt crazy to think that. But it rang with truth, every time the concept crossed his mind. He was gay, and had fallen hard and quickly for his pansexual roommate. His pansexual roommate who currently hated him. Oh God. How was he going to fix this? Was it possible? Or had he irreparably fucked everything up?

He needed another minute, before he could face going back to that room. He didn’t know if David would still be there, but he could be. And even the possibility made Patrick break into a sweat. He stopped, on the way down the hallway, in one of the bathrooms between a set of galley doors. “Hey Rach, I just need a sec, could you wait here for me? We’ll go back together.” He said, and she smiled at him.

“Sure.” She said with a smile, and Patrick returned it weakly, before turning and stepping into one of the little water closets. He closed the door behind him and locked it, leaning against it immediately and trying to collect himself. He took several deep breaths, and tried to prepare for the awkwardness and pain that might be coming a minute or two later.

After a minute, he flushed the toilet (just to keep up the charade) and exited the bathroom stall, ready as he ever would be to potentially face David in a small enclosed space, with Rachel in tow. Except there was one problem.

Rachel was gone. Oh God… where was she?

It had been a little over an hour since David had cried last, and he’d applied a cucumber mint face mask, followed by a generous amount of eucalyptus under-eye serum (despite the fact that he was going through a lot right now and his hands were far from steady). As a result, the puffiness and evidence of his morning of misery were thankfully no longer visible on his face. He’d sat in his
room and cried for a good half an hour after breakfast, just praying that Patrick would at least care about him enough not to return right away, to let him have his space. He had.

It was weird, Patrick was the one that had made him feel this way, and yet David still felt an overwhelming desire to go to him for comfort. If this had been any other tragedy to befall David, he would have found all the solace he needed in Patrick’s arms, he had no doubt about that. But because the Patrick was part of the pain, David had no shelter from the storm, no emotional anchor. So he felt lost. He had drifted into the sea of despair, for a while there after breakfast, but eventually his tears had stopped, possibly because his body just didn’t have any more to shed.

So when the tears had stopped, and it seemed that they wouldn’t start again, David had decided to first and foremost: fix his face. But after that, he’d gone though his class schedule, double checked that he’d bought all the correct books. He loaded up his laptop, and made sure his word processor was working fine, and checked that his sleek little Five Star notebook had both a pen and a back up pen, as well as a pencil, eraser, and sharpened. He’d even picked out his outfit for the following day (and damn was it a good one). He was all ready for classes. There wasn’t really much else he could do.

David was just thinking about going to see what Styla were up to (he was toying with the idea of giving them a portmanteau just to save himself the syllables of saying ‘stevie and twyla’ every time, but hadn’t decided on taking it public yet), just when there was a knock on the door. David’s stomach dropped. He cleared his throat, and tried to shake out the nerves. “Um, who is it?” He called out, and scrunched his eyes closed hoping for it to be anyone but one particular person.

“Hey David, it’s Rachel, can I come in?”

Fuck. It was the one particular person.

Well, there wasn’t much to do about it. “It’s open.” He replied, and braced himself as the door swung open into the room. And there she was, looking like a Neutrogena face wash model, smiling at him all wholesome and cute and friendly.

“Hey David! How’s it going, all ready for classes tomorrow?” She asked, stepping inside, and David almost had to remind himself that he hated her for a second, because he could tell how genuinely interested she was in hearing his reply, how honestly friendly and just… nice she was. David wasn’t nice. No one had ever called David nice.

“Um, yeah. I was oscillating between two wardrobe options for a while, but I think I settled on one with a sleek but classic silhouette, so…”
“Wow, you don’t sound like any of the guys back home.” She replied, smiling at him wide and almost goggling at him like he was some sort of exotic zoo animal. He had to remind himself that she had probably rarely ever left Thunder Bay, so like Patrick, her cultural exposure was limited and not as varied as David’s had been. She seemed to realize after a moment that she’d said something a little insensitive, though, because he saw an apologetic expression wash over her face and she rushed to add, “But in such a good way! I wish there were guys like you back in Thunder Bay. Patrick was like a diamond in the rough, up north. Not many guys like him either.” She said, fondly. And David couldn’t help himself.

“Yeah, I could see that.” He said, and she beamed at him.

“So David, I wanted to ask you something. Patrick is taking me to a restaurant for lunch, and I am pretty sure we’re officially going to get back together,”

“Oh? Is he?” David asked, knowing the words came out in practically a squeak, but not being able to do anything about it after the fact. His brain was shutting down, but Rachel was still right in front of him. He was pretty sure brain matter would start leaking out his ears at any second.

“Yeah, so do you think you’ll be around this afternoon?” She asked, and David barely heard her over the ringing in his ears.

“I’m sorry, what was that?” He managed to ask, coughing a little, choking on his shock.

“Will you be in the room later this afternoon, or do you have plans?” She asked again, and David got a chilling feeling, as he followed her line of thinking.

“I… I’m not sure…”

“Okay, so what is the protocol, with you guys sharing a room? Do we leave a sock on the doorknob so you know not to come in, or…?” She asked, and David could tell she had no idea that what she was saying was painful. She just thought she was speaking to the platonic roommate of her soon-to-be-boyfriend (again) who had no feelings for him whatsoever.

But fuck was it painful. David thought he might need to sit down. He wondered if there was a casual way to do that. He didn’t know if he was capable of speech, anymore. All he could picture was returning to his room, only to find a sock on his doorknob. Meaning that Patrick and Rachel
were inside, and they were… it would mean they were… He couldn’t even think it. His mind was rejecting it. Except it was real. This was happening. She said they were getting back together. Things like that were a reality of his future here.

Was it too late to switch roommates?

Realizing he was still expected to answer, he forced his mouth to form the words “Um, I guess…” and just at that moment, a very flustered and slightly panicked looking Patrick appeared at the door, which Rachel had left open.

“Rachel? Rachel! I said to wait--” He started, his eyes on her where she sat on his bed, before he looked up and saw David. All the (little) colour drained out of his skin, and his eyes went wide. “David.” He said, clearly not happy to see him. Yeah, well, I’m not that happy to see you, either, David thought as he looked helplessly back at him. Their eyes remained locked for probably too long, when Rachel, once again oblivious to the moment, spoke.

“Hey Patty, I was just grabbing my purse and catching up with David. Are you ready to go?” She asked, but still Patrick was looking at David.

“Yeah, sure.” He replied, still looking right at David, into his very soul, it felt. His eyes were saying something, but David didn’t know what. He didn’t care. Patrick was leaving to go on a date with Rachel, they were going to get back together, and there were going to be socks on doorknobs, which in and of itself was very incorrect, let alone the sexual implications.

David was starting to get an old familiar feeling. He allowed himself to slide into it, like an old glove, and there was a comfort in the feeling, even if he knew that it would only be short lived. Like every other time, it would inevitably end in more pain, but for now it was like a balm for the ache in his soul. Suddenly, as he looked at Patrick, all he could think of was ‘Revenge fuck’.

Call it revenge, call it a rebound. David didn’t care. He needed it. It would make him less pathetic. It would make him not some helpless guy that had fallen for a straight guy. It would give him some control and agency in his life. He would pick the guy, he would fuck him, and he would know that he was still desirable, that people still wanted him. And he would probably hate himself afterwards, like usual, but at least Patrick would know what he’d lost. What he was missing.

David supposed it could be a girl, too. He liked them just as much as he liked guys. But he wanted this to be a guy. Because Patrick was a guy. And a mean, vindictive part of himself thought that maybe it would hurt Patrick more. He wasn’t sure he would even tell Patrick, but even if he didn’t, he liked the idea that the news would have caused him pain.
David never said he was a good person.

When he was hurt, David could be mean, he could be bitchy, he could be vindictive. Like a wounded animal, he was especially unpredictable and dangerous in this state. Patrick must have noticed something shift in his eyes, because his turned even more worried, if that was possible. “David, are you--” But David couldn’t let him finish that question.

“I’m going to Stevie and Twyla’s, you guys have fun.” He said, and his voice was ice cold and didn’t shake or waver at all as he stomped out the room like he was on a runway. Sashay away, he thought, as he left the two of them alone, crossing the hall and entering Styla’s room without even knocking. Knocking would have ruined the effect, considering their door was like 6 feet from his own.

Several hours later, a very exhausted and haggard Patrick returned to campus alone, having taken the bus back up from downtown. Rachel had left in her car straight from the restaurant, and Patrick was so glad he’d convinced her not to leave her backpack in the room. Lunch had been awful and wonderful all at once. Being in a public place hadn’t stopped her from crying, but eventually, they sort of seemed to get past it, and together they had talked about his feelings, why he thought he was gay.

Patrick had explained that he didn’t think he was, he couldn’t really explain it properly, but he knew it, now. It was like a lightswitch had been flicked in his heart, and there wasn’t any going back from it. He had assured her it wasn’t her fault, and that he truly did love her, and in the end, he thought she believed him. She’d reached across the table for his hand, halfway through their meal, and they spent the rest of their time like that, holding hands, while Patrick told her all about David. And she listened, and encouraged him, because Rachel really was a great girl.

Patrick felt about a thousand pounds lighter, as he returned to campus, knowing that Rachel and him were finally, truly done. And that she wasn’t nearly as hurt as she could have been, and was finally free to go off and find someone who loved her like she deserved. And she deserved the very best. It was just that he couldn’t give that to her.

He knew he had probably ruined things with David, but he couldn’t stop the rising bubble of hope that floated to the top of his chest, the closer he got to the Lady Eaton dorms. The bus dropped him
off outside the library, and as he walked back in the warm september afternoon, he pictured the conversation with David, how he wanted it to go.

He would start with the truth. He was gay, and he had feelings for him. He’d beg his forgiveness for not telling him about Rachel, but would assure him that they had truly been broken up, and he hadn’t expected her to show up the way she did. He’d tell him he was sorry for hurting him, and for not being able to assure him right away that they weren’t really going to get back together. He’d tell David how much he’d loved spending the past week with him, and that already he couldn’t picture his life without him.

Things had gone so well with Rachel, Patrick had found himself hoping that they might go well with David, too. Surely it wasn’t too late to go back to the way things were. It had been less than a single day. How could things get ruined forever in just one day?

When he arrived at the dorm, he climbed the stairs to the second floor with equal amounts of hope and dread, and turned down his hallway to find a large clump of students (including Twyla and Stevie) sitting on the floor of the hall, playing cards. He scanned the faces immediately, and noticed David was not amongst them.

“Hey guys.” He said, waiving a little shyly, very aware that news of Rachel had probably spread like wildfire already. Stevie looked up at him.

“Patrick-- hey.” She said, stiffly. She sounded… weird. Really weird. Patrick couldn’t help this sick, strange feeling that washed over him.

“Where’s David?” He asked, with no preamble. Stevie’s eyes widened a little before narrowing.

“Where’s Rachel?”

“What do you mean, where’s Rachel? She went home, we’re not together. You didn’t answer my question. Where’s David?” He asked, knowing his tone was sharper than he’d like, especially around these other people he wasn’t as close with. But he didn’t care. All he could think about was not wanting to hear one specific answer to his question, and how much he thought he was about to hear it.

“You’re not together? That’s not what she told David…” Stevie said, and it was like ice was injected into Patrick’s veins.
“Why, what did she--”

“Patrick, she talked to David about what the protocol was for fucking in your room, she asked if she should put a sock on the doorknob.” Stevie was trying to explain, and Patrick was just trying to stop his heart from pounding out of his chest. He was going to have a panic attack, he knew it. Rachel, you ruined everything. He thought, desperately.

“Stevie. Where’s David?” He asked, already knowing the answer. He wasn’t here. He had to be somewhere. He bit the inside of his lip hard, feeling the sharp pain and hoping it would ground him for her answer.

“Don’t freak out Patrick, but… you know Sebastien?” She started.

*Patrick freaked out.*

David was not a prude about sex. He didn’t subscribe to the bullshit philosophy that you should wait until you know you’re in love, or even worse, for marriage. Sex was an act of physical pleasure. It didn’t have to mean anything. People at their core were just animals, after all. It was just fucking.

He had felt *bad* about himself after sex before, he’d felt ashamed. But he’d never before now felt *guilty*. Who he had sex with was supposed to be no one’s business but his own. If he wanted to shame spiral into bad decisions, those were his own decisions to feel bad about. He had never before considered what someone else might think of the choices he made when it came to his body.

So this was a first. Sebastien Raine had by all means been an amazing fuck. He was hot, fit, experienced. He had a single room, and it smelled like patchouli and sandalwood incense that he wasn’t technically supposed to burn according to dorm policy. Sebastien hadn’t wanted to cuddle afterwards, either, which suited David just fine. It seemed like he would be a solid booty call, a number in his black book that David would have been glad to have, if it wasn’t for the god-awful bizarre feeling of guilt ruining everything.
He had no reason to feel guilty. Patrick had gotten back together with Rachel, and was probably in their room, fucking her right now. No, there was no reason to feel guilty.

And yet, he did.

He walked slowly, across the small bridge from the Champlain College dorms, where Sebastien’s room was. David wasn’t really sure how they’d met, but Sebastien had crashed a couple of their floor parties, and could most days be found reading Nietzsche or some other pretentious shit at the top of the stone bleachers in the main quad. That’s where David had found him, purposefully searching him out in hopes of a hookup. When it had looked to be successful, he’d texted Stevie that he wouldn’t be back for a while, so she wouldn’t worry. She’d replied with a thumbs up emoji, a fire emoji, and an eggplant emoji.

Stevie was all about David’s plan for revenge sex. She seemed to share his casual attitude towards physical pleasure, and he appreciated that about her.

As he returned to his dorm and climbed the stairs, his guilt started to twist uncomfortably in his chest, and it warred with anger at Patrick, and worry that he was going to find a sock on his doorknob when he got upstairs.

When he came upon the group in the hall playing cards, Stevie’s eyes had met his. He’d expected for her to seem excited, and want all the details, considering how much she had encouraged and urged him to do this. But she didn’t look excited. She looked terrified. Her eyes were wide and she seemed awkward. David looked down the hall to see there was no sock on his doorknob.

“Is Patrick--”

“In your room.” Was all Stevie said, and David nodded absently and walked towards his door. He felt a little like he was in a dream. This whole day had felt that way, come to think of it.

He paused when his hand closed over the doorknob, and steeled himself with a deep breath. Then he turned the knob slowly, and stepped into the room. Patrick was sitting at his computer, on his side of the desk, and he looked up at David as he entered. His eyes looked red and puffy, much like David’s had before he had fixed it with some intense skincare attention. He’d been crying. Fuck.

“Where’s Rachel?” David asked, because he didn’t know what else to ask. His entire day and all
the decisions he had made had been based on the knowledge that Patrick was back together with her. She had told him she needed the room to fuck. So where was she?

“Gone.” Patrick replied, shifting in his seat so he could lean on the back of the chair and look at David with inscrutable eyes. He wanted to say they were sorrowful, and they were. But there also seemed to be an anger there, like they were hurling accusatory lances into David’s soul. David was left reeling and confused from the force of Patrick’s gaze.

“Gone? What do you mean gone?” David asked. None of this was making sense.

“I mean she’s gone, David. She was never supposed to be here, we were broken up. We’re still broken up, I told her that. She understands now.” He replied, but his voice was colder than usual, and left David with chills.

“But she said you were back together!” David cried, louder than he’d meant, and shriller.

“Yeah, well, she shouldn’t have said that.”

“She said she needed our room, so you could--”

“She really shouldn’t have said that.” Patrick replied, cutting him off. But he wasn’t sounding apologetic. He wasn’t sounding desperate. There was something hollow to his voice.

They were quiet for a minute, both of them looking at one another. David didn’t know what to say. His brain seemed to be in meltdown mode.

“So you just, what, *fucked* Sebastien Raine?” Patrick said suddenly, his voice tinged with acid. David was left reeling in shock for a good few seconds, before a fire seemed to rise from his belly. He was not going to be talked to like that, even from Patrick. David had always been defensive. People knew not to push him, because he would lash out like a viper, even to friends or family. And when David was in fight-mode, he would always go for the jugular.

“I don’t see how that is any of your business.” David replied sharply. “Besides, I thought you were fucking her!” He added, his voice rising.
“Except I didn’t fuck her, David. Unlike you and Sebastien.” David made a mental note to yell at Stevie later for telling Patrick about Sebastien, but at the moment, all of his anger was being focused on Patrick. Because David didn’t like what he was insinuating. Like he was some sort of a whore.

“Again! That is none of your business.” David snapped back, because he didn’t want to talk about this with Patrick. He didn’t want to see the judgement in his face, or hear the hurt and the anger in his tone, for doing something perfectly within his rights with David’s own body. And maybe he was desperately regretting his choices, too, and was wishing with all his might that he could go back in time and choose not to sleep with Sebastien. If he’d known that Patrick was going to end it, he wouldn’t have done it. He knows he wouldn’t have. Oh God, why did he do it? But it was too late, the deed was done. And Patrick was coming at David, and David was acting defensively. Like he always did. Everything seemed so out of control, and David had no idea how to get things back on the rails.

“You know what? Your right. It’s none of my business. You don’t owe anything to me. We don’t owe anything to each other. Sleep with anyone you want, it’s not like I care.” Patrick spat the words with a hurt and venom David wouldn’t have previously thought him capable. He was obviously aching inside, and yet David couldn’t help himself from rising in defensive anger.

“Oh, you don’t care?” David asked, skepticism and accusation dripping from his words. He raised one full eyebrow at Patrick.

“David, we’ve only known each other a week. I’m not your boyfriend. Fuck whoever you want.” Patrick responded, his words as cold as ice. His tear-stung red eyes looked sad and exhausted. David faltered. Patrick’s words were like arrows, and he felt like each one hit him in his heart, splitting the last down the center and deepening the wound.

“You’re… you don’t care.” David repeated, clarifying. He was still angry, his words still sharp and sarcastic, but his sadness and hurt bled through a little.

“No! You could fuck a hundred guys for all I’d care!” Patrick spat back, clearly lashing out and trying to hurt David. The old David, the one that was sort of driving the bus right now in this fight, heard those words and thought of them like a challenge.

“Okay, well I don’t know who has that sort of stamina.” He replied, and Patrick rolled his eyes.

“You know what I mean. This is none of my business. We aren’t anything to each other, you don’t owe me anything. I don’t care.”
“We’re not anything to each other?” David asked incredulously, interrupting. Because, okay, that hurt. And it was bullshit, and Patrick knew it.

“We’re-- David, seven days ago, we didn’t even know each other, we were living in two completely different worlds. No, we’re not anything to each other. You can do what you want, sleep with whoever you want.” Patrick sounded tired, but David didn’t care. He jutted his chin out defiantly.

“I know I can.” He said, because it was true. David could do whatever he wanted. No matter the crush he had had on Patrick, no matter how sad David was that whatever little bubble they’d been living in had burst, he was still an independent man who had agency over his own body. Damn straight he could fuck who he wanted. This was a free country, and he was a legally consenting adult. He could fuck whoever the hell he pleased, he didn’t need permission.

“Well then good.” Patrick replied, a little petulantly. And suddenly, David didn’t want to let him off the hook so easily. Patrick had been flirting with David all week. Sitting on his lap, cuddling with him in bed, grinding with him on the dance floor. He didn’t just get to say they were nothing to each other. That was fucking bullshit and he knew it.

“Good. So you don’t care about me at all.” David replied, and Patrick sighed.

“We’re roommates, David.” David twisted his face at this.

“Were we just roommates when we danced together at the club last night? Were those just my roommate’s hands that were all over my body, then?” He asked, each word a dagger, intending to draw blood. Patrick sighed again, heavily.

“I don’t know what to tell you, David.” He said, eventually. And he seemed completely depleted of energy.

A silence fell between them, after that, but they remained frozen, just looking at each other. David was glaring, and Patrick might have been too, if his eyes weren’t so swollen, and he didn’t seem so tired. David didn’t know what else to say, so after the silence had stretched on for far too long, he sighed as well and said “Okay, fine. We’re just roommates.” And he turned on his heel and left.
Patrick didn’t know what the protocol was, for dinner. He and David had been in a massive fight, and he was pretty sure that he’d run straight to Stevie and Twyla. Which, he could hardly blame him. Patrick had been way more harsh than he’d meant to be. He couldn’t help it, though, he was just so furiously jealous. He’d been seeing red. Literally, by the look of his eyes in the mirror. And David was probably over there now, talking about what a jerk Patrick was, and he’d probably deserve it.

Patrick was a dick in fights. He always got his back up, and he’d fight to defend himself even when he knew he was wrong. And in this case, Patrick knew he was wrong. But the hurt and the jealousy had won out over logic in the end, and he’d lashed out.

He truly didn’t have anything to justify being mad at David. He didn’t own David, David wasn’t beholden to him. They weren’t in a committed relationship, and wishing they were in one didn’t make it so. And he certainly had no right to make David feel bad about what he did. David was a grown man, and this wasn’t the fucking 1950s. People had sex. He hadn’t done anything wrong.

But just the idea of the two of them together made Patrick’s skin crawl, made him feel sick to his stomach. He couldn’t get over it, and it made him angry and jealous and just every bad feeling imaginable all combined into one. And he couldn’t stop thinking that it wouldn’t have happened, if Patrick had insisted on sleeping on the floor last night. Or if he’d corrected Rachel in front of David, when she called herself his girlfriend. Or if he hadn’t fucking gone to the bathroom, leaving her alone to go and tell David they were back together and needed the Goddamn room for sex.

That was the only thing that truly made Patrick angry at Rachel. He had told her to stay there and wait for him. But she hadn’t known what was between them, she had no idea what she was doing when she said those things to David. And honestly, she had every reason to be optimistic that Patrick would cave and that they’d get back together. They always had in the past.

But now things were well and truly fucked.

Patrick was stuck. Regret threatened to drown him. He knew he was wrong, and that he should apologize and beg David’s forgiveness, but he couldn’t because he couldn’t get over this fucking jealousy, and he knew that to talk to David further right now would be to push them further apart than they already were, if that was possible. There was no way he could avoid sniping at David, in
his current state. Patrick was hurt, and the wounds were too raw. He knew he’d end up lashing out, or they’d have some sort of misunderstanding, and he’d make things even worse.

So Patrick sat in their room, and watched the minutes tick by on the clock. Dinner would stop serving in half an hour, if he wanted to eat, he’d have to get going. Except he just continued to sit there. He was embarrassed, he knew their friends knew all of their business, and it appeared they had taken David’s side.

Good, he needed support right now, he thought. Patrick wished he could give it to him, but it wasn’t within his power at that time. If it couldn’t be him, Patrick was glad it could be Stevie and Twyla. He’d honestly gladly give up all his friends, to make David feel better.

Patrick decided to skip dinner. Instead, he ripped open a pack of strawberry pop tarts, and ate them cold. He spent the rest of the night in the room, absently watching baseball games he didn’t care about and endlessly scrolling through twitter and TSN on his phone. He was waiting for David.

David didn’t return until past 10. Patrick had been thinking about going to sleep, he had his first class in the morning, but he hadn’t wanted to sleep before David got back. If David came back. There was a strong chance he wasn’t going to return at all, that night at least. He was pretty sure the girls would happily house him, if he asked.

But David came back. He’d silently walked into the room, that was mostly dark, lit only by a small bedside lamp on Patrick’s side, and looked at Patrick. They held eye contact for a long moment, before Patrick got out a very hoarse and vulnerable sounding “Hey.”

David regarded him for a second, before replying. “Hey.” Was all he said, and then after another long beat, he turned away and began to get ready for bed. He stripped as usual, and Patrick felt that usual thrum of excitement under his breastbone as David pulled his shirt over his head, but unlike usual, David found a t-shirt and put it on for bed.

That one small act made Patrick more sad than he would have expected, and he felt more distant from David in that moment than he had even during their fight. There was a wall between them now that would have made Donald Trump jealous. It was invisible, but it felt impenetrable. Everything they had, before today, the intimacy of the bond they had forged… snuffed out.

David left to go brush his teeth and do his nightly skincare routine, and Patrick turned off his laptop, and got settled in bed. He lay on his right side, facing David’s bed, and he waited. After a while, David finally returned. But when he laid down, he didn’t face Patrick, as had become their custom. He rolled immediately away, onto his right side, and faced the wall, the act of which spoke
volumes to Patrick. He had never felt further away from David. They were over.

Patrick laid there for a minute, staring longingly at David’s back, before words left his mouth unbidden. “Goodnight, David.” He said, but silence was his only response.

*He must be sleeping*, Patrick lied to himself. And he rolled over to his left side, facing the wall, and focused on trying to sleep. Tomorrow was a big day, his first day of classes. And he was going to have to face it without David.

*I can do this.* He told himself, and wondered if that was a lie, too.

Chapter End Notes

Ok so yes, angst. But I promise I'm at work on the next chapter!!! Hopefully by the end of the weekend :) 

I'd love to know what you thought!
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Rachel is gone, and David and Patrick are left with the wreckage of their old relationship. Can they rebuild what they've lost?

Chapter Notes

Ok first of all I'm sorry about the angst in the previous chapter! But hopefully I made up for it by updating way more quickly than usual lol this fic was always meant to be a bit of a slowburn, so I hope you're still with me and are wanting more!

Now to start fixing things for these boys. But they're gonna have to work for it ;)

Ps. This is 15k so like maybe get a snack or a glass of water? Lol sorry!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

That first night after Rachel left had been the hardest. Sleeping with their backs to one another, the rift between them seemed irreparable to Patrick. He’d barely slept, upset as he was about what had happened with David, and had been groggy and unalert on his first day of classes. Luckily, they weren’t teaching much on the first day, and his Mondays were light anyways. He only had Economics 101 that morning, at 10. His Monday afternoon would hold a seminar for his Intro to Business class, but because his first lecture period wasn’t until Wednesday, the seminar was cancelled today.

They’d woken up and gotten ready earlier than usual that morning, because David also had a class. David asked him what his schedule was like for the day, and Patrick answered him, happy at first that he wasn’t entirely icing him out. But what few words passed between them were short and without warmth, and left Patrick feeling more uneasy than perhaps even silence would have. That uneasiness grew when David had gone down to breakfast as soon as he was ready, without consulting or inviting Patrick, who had been ready for a while and had kind of been waiting for him.

Not knowing what to do, Patrick had waited about 5 minutes, then gone down alone, after him. There, he’d found David sitting with Miguel and Jake, and Patrick joined them after getting his food. They chatted amongst the four of them, mostly about the classes they’d be starting today, and Twyla eventually joined them. They talked as a group, but David never made eye contact or spoke directly with Patrick. Never even came close to it. And that wasn’t lost on Patrick. Things were civil between them, but they were icy. Impersonal. And so, so weird. Patrick hated it. This was all his fault. If he could go back in time, he could think of about a hundred things he could do to change it. To make it better. But he couldn’t. So he was stuck with the consequences.
It was the strangest, most dissonant feeling Patrick had ever experienced. On the one hand he was longing for David with every molecule in his body. He ached for him; for his touch, for his gaze, for his affection. But on the other, Patrick was still mad. Or, more accurately, he was jealous. When he looked at David, he wanted to hold him close and kiss his eyelids, and run his fingers through his hair. He wanted all of that, but then he’d get a mental image of David with Sebastien, and Patrick’s mind would reject all of those warm fuzzy feelings, and he’d be jealous and mad all over again. And then he couldn’t stand the idea of touching him, because Sebastien had already touched him first. It was jealous and possessive and he wasn’t proud of it, but it was the way he felt.

Why couldn’t David have just waited one day before running off and fucking another guy? Just one more day? Fuck, even one more hour might have been enough. Yes, Rachel had probably devastated him with her question about room-sex protocol, and Patrick felt like an asshole for it. But couldn’t David have just waited a Goddamn minute before running off and fucking the douchiest guy he could possibly think of? It was like David had hand-selected his target to hurt Patrick the most, he knew how much Patrick didn’t like that guy. He was slimy and creepy, and so fucking pretentious. The thought of David with him made Patrick’s skin crawl.

So, yes. Patrick felt like this was all his fault, he knew David was hurting too and for that he felt guilty and regretful, and wished with all his might that he could go back and make it never have happened, to make things go back to the way they had been. But because it had happened, and he couldn’t go back, he had to live with the consequences. And the consequences were that he was mad at David, and hurt by him, and jealous of his time with Sebastien. And Patrick wasn’t feeling all that close to David at that moment, either. The feeling was kind of mutual. Things were broken, now, but there wasn’t any way to change that. They were just going to have to forge ahead, with their relationship fractured the way it had been, and see where time and some space took them.

They didn’t get much space from each other, sharing a room and a social group as they did, but time did make things a little better, in some ways. The hostile tension between them started to diminish, as Patrick found his angry feelings had faded quickly, and he was feeling less jealous every day. But those nasty feelings had been replaced by others that were in some ways worse. Regret, longing, and a profound feeling of loss now buzzed about his head and heart all his waking hours, and often plagued his dreams. And it was made so much worse by the fact that he had to share a small space with the object of his longing.

As each day passed, he found himself becoming more and more regretful and distraught over the divide that had been created between them. Because even if things were less outright icy now, it wasn’t even close to what it had been like. Before. It was like they had to rebuild their relationship all over again, from scratch. They were starting all over again, except this time, things were being
built on a foundation or hurt feelings and mistrust. And things were moving much, much slower.

Things were going so much more slowly this time, that even though Patrick recognized that things were getting incrementally better and he should be happy about that, he found himself growing increasingly impatient. A few weeks into classes, and they were spending time together again, but it was mostly in group settings. And it almost felt like they were merely acquaintances existing within the same social circle. Everything was wrong, and Patrick didn’t know how to fix it. He wanted to fix it, he wanted to reach out to David and hold his hand and beg his forgiveness. Do something, do anything. But day after day, he held back, wanting to wait to follow David’s lead. Because Patrick was terrified of screwing things up again, or making them worse.

He knew he was the one that had made things bad to begin with, he’d blown his chance, so it wasn’t his place to push David, if he wasn’t ready. He had to give David the space he needed, and wait for him to be ready to get closer again. It was the hardest thing that Patrick had ever done, following David’s ambivalent lead. But Patrick was sure, if David wanted them to be close again, he would let him know. It wasn’t Patrick’s place to push him. He just kept telling himself that. When he’d catch David looking at him with those eyes, he held back the impulse to reach for his hand, or to press him on his feelings. Because if David wanted to tell him, he would. He owed Patrick nothing at this point.

One day, David had been off at his Art History class, and Patrick had been hanging out in Stevie and Twyla’s room. Stevie was sitting on the floor, between Twyla’s knees, with her back against her bed, as Twyla braided and re-braided her hair into different styles while they talked. Patrick sat on Stevie’s bed across from them, and he’d been watching Twyla’s hands move, lost in a daze. Stevie must have noticed.

“Hey, so are you and David ever going to get back to normal?” Stevie asked, shaking Patrick from his daydream. He had been thinking of David, it was almost as if she’d known. Although, it was probably written all over his face, to someone who knew him well enough. And he had come to know Stevie and Twyla very well, even if they were a little closer with David than they were with him.

Patrick had no illusions that he was still being included in this friend group for any other reason than the sufferance of one David Rose. If David had said the word, the girls would have closed ranks and shut Patrick out, he was sure of it. And he was completely okay with it. David deserved to have friends. He needed them. David was sensitive, Patrick knew. He needed a support circle, even if Patrick couldn’t be a part of it. So he would have been okay with it, if David had asked them not to hang out with him, but was grateful that David had allowed him to stay. It meant there was hope. And also, he liked his friends.
“I don’t know what you mean.” Patrick replied, taking out his phone and hitting the button to see if he had any notifications. There was nothing, so he stuck it back in his pocket. He did all this to avoid looking at Stevie, but he still somehow saw her roll her eyes, out of his periphery.

“Don’t be an idiot, yes you do.” Stevie demanded, and her tone was authoritative, but there was also something tender about it. She stared at Patrick, and he shifted under her gaze, uncomfortable. He of course knew exactly what she meant. And he didn’t know how to answer her. Probably because the most truthful answer would be just too painful to say. That he didn’t think they’d ever get back to the way things were. He sighed.

“I don’t know.” He answered, eventually. It was the truth. He didn’t think things would be back to the way they were soon, but he didn’t know. He hoped that would be good enough for her, and the end of the conversation.

“Are things getting better?” She asked, and Patrick felt himself getting frustrated. Stevie would probably know the answer to that better than him, so why was she asking him?

“You’re closer to him than I am these days, so you tell me. Are things getting better?” He asked, his tone a little harsher than he’d intended. He was just so on edge these days. Stevie would understand.

“I asked you.” She replied, undaunted.

“I don’t know what to tell you, Stevie.” He answered, his tone relaying his exasperation. This was his least favourite topic to talk about, and she knew it.

“So that’s a no, then.” She replied, and Patrick looked down at his hand, where he was rubbing back and forth on the polar fleece blanket on Stevie’s bed, making the soft material turn from dark to light and back again.

“That’s an I don’t know, Stevie.” He replied, softer this time, sad. He sighed again, somewhat dramatically, he knew. But fuck it, he was feeling dramatic. It had been weeks and David hadn’t given any clear signs that he wanted Patrick to try to get close to him again.

They were quiet for a moment, and Twyla continued the complicated braid she was twisting into Stevie’s hair. Patrick returned to watching her sure hands move deftly, Stevie’s shiny dark hair
“You know, my cousin went through a really bad break up. But it was especially hard because they had a baby together, and her boyfriend Rick had nowhere to go, so he had to move into their garage, and they still had to share their truck…” Twyla said, eventually, her tone casual and bright, sounding hopeful, like she was hoping her story might help Patrick. Instead, he was just baffled, like he often was at her stories. It didn’t mean he didn’t appreciate it, though.

“Is there a point in there, Twy?” Stevie asked, at a natural break in Twyla’s story. Twyla just smiled and forged on.

“Just that things were bad for a while, real bad, like one night they had to call the cops, and--”

“The point, Twyla.” Patrick interrupted, gently. He knew Twyla easily got off track in her stories, most of which involved a cousin of some sort. He didn’t mean it harshly, and she didn’t take it that way. Patrick really liked Twyla, she was just genuinely friendly and sweet.

“Just that time makes everything better. Even for them. Things slowly got better, and then after a couple months in the garage, this raccoon got in, and Rick had to sleep inside the house that night, and one thing led to another, and they got back together! And now they couldn’t be happier, they’ve had three more babies since then, and Rick hasn’t even had to sleep in the garage once. Which is good, because I don’t think they ever took care of that raccoon problem.” When Twyla finished she shrugged, and then continued on Stevie’s hair. In front of her, Stevie was looking at Patrick, her brows raised. She twisted to look up at Twyla for a second, then sat forward again, looking at back at Patrick.

“Twyla, that was a surprisingly relevant story. See Patrick? If Twyla’s cousins can get back together, so can you and David.” Stevie said, and Patrick ran his hand through his hair, tugging at the back that was getting a little long. He thought that he could probably ask David to touch it up, but instantly thought that was way too intimate, and that there was no way that was an appropriate request at this time. He felt his spirits deflate a little at the thought.

“Okay, first of all, David and I were never together to begin with And second of all, I don’t think Twyla said they were both her cousins…” He replied, and he looked at Twyla at the end, hopefully. She looked like she was in a bit of a daze, focusing on the braids, and Stevie’s hair in her hands. But then she looked up, and her brows went up.

“Oh, they are. But they’re third cousins from each other, so it’s okay.” She replied with a shrug. Patrick just blinked at her a second, and then laughed. He didn’t want to do the math on how that
was possible, so he decided to leave it alone.

“I don’t think he’s ever going to make a move, Stevie.” David moaned, despondently. He and Stevie had just smoked a joint, and were back on her bed, cuddling and watching romcoms on her laptop. She twisted to look at him, then shuffled away a little and sat up, turning toward him.

“You want him to make a move?” She asked, her eyes wide and her words dripping with sarcasm, as usual. She was doing that “guileless” look thing she did, and David rolled his eyes at her.

“You know what I mean. I want him to reach out. A gesture. An olive branch, something. But he’s not giving me anything.” He further moaned, slumping his chin down into his hand, elbow on knee, dramatically.

“Okay, but have you tried talking to him?” Stevie asked, infuriatingly reasonable.

“It shouldn’t be up to me! He’s the one that said we’re only roommates, who wouldn’t admit that there had been something there, between us. I’m not going to put myself out there like that, after he said--There was something there, Stevie. I’m not crazy.” He added that last bit suddenly, and looked to Stevie, demanding with his eyes that she validate him. She rolled her eyes, as if to say obviously.

“Anyone with eyes could see that there was something there, David. Now go get it back.” She elbowed him in the arm, and David hissed and reached over with his hand to rub the spot. Stevie had bony elbows.

“No, no. Absolutely not. You don’t see the way he looks at me, Stevie.” He argued. She just wasn’t getting it. There was no way David could make the first move. Not now. Besides, he was convinced Patrick didn’t even want more anymore, and he refused to be rejected by him again. Reject him once, shame on Patrick. Reject him twice, shame on David. Nope. Nuh uh. Not in a million years. David’s pride wouldn’t allow it.
Stevie rolled her eyes at him. “What, like you hung the stars and moon yourself? That way he looks at you?” She asked, her tone derisive.

“You obviously need your eyes checked.” David scoffed. He knew what she was doing, she was trying to cheer him up, get him back together with Patrick so David would stop being so mopey and emo all the time. But she didn’t know. She didn’t know the way Patrick made David feel now. Unsure, and like he was constantly on eggshells. It was driving him crazy. David was ready to move past things, to try to be friends again, but Patrick was being so distant. David just didn’t think he wanted him like that, anymore. David had tainted his opinion of him, when he’d slept with Sebastien. David had ruined everything, and he might as well just try to move on, because he was never getting Patrick back.

They were quiet for a minute, both of them pretending to watch the movie. But David wasn’t watching, he was thinking, his mind moving at a furious pace. And he had a feeling that Stevie was just waiting for him to spit out whatever was tumbling around his brain, rattling so hard she could practically hear it. “I don’t think he likes me, like that. Anymore. I don’t.” He said, slowly. “Maybe one day we can be friends again, but we’ll never be what we were.” He added, finally, and his words were raw and emotional, and when he looked over at Stevie, he could feel tears stinging at his eyes. She dropped the sarcasm and stopped giving him a hard time immediately, her expression melting to one of sympathy.

“I don’t think that’s true…” Stevie said, and if David hadn’t been so convinced that he had ruined things forever, that he would forever be tainted in Patrick’s eyes, he might have wondered if she knew more than she was letting on. She was friends with Patrick too, after all. Perhaps she was keeping some secrets of his, sworn to secrecy, but trying in her way to let David know that Patrick still cared. But the thought didn’t cross his mind. Instead, all he could think of was she’s wrong, he’s disgusted by me.

It was the only explanation for why Patrick wasn’t talking to him, hadn’t tried to initiate anything, on a more personal or intimate level. Everything between them these days was on the surface, never getting below the skin. David would barely even call them friends, at this point. More just like two people, existing within the same small space in the world. Yes, they weren’t fighting. But sometimes, David thought that fighting might even be better. Because at least then they’d be speaking to each other, even if it was very loudly.

“I think I need to just try to get over him, I ruined my chances, burned those bridges, that ship has sailed, whatever you want to say. But it’s over. Patrick doesn’t want to be with me. He doesn’t even want to talk to me. I need to do something. I need to just move on.” David said, decisively, a decision crystalizing inside him. It didn’t make him happy. It was very much a relic of the old him, the David he didn’t like very much. The one that hung out with rich kids from private schools in a sort of lord of the flies-esque battle for social dominance. Where sex could be a tool, or a weapon, or a vice. Or sometimes all three.
“Okayyyy.” Stevie said. “And how do you plan to do that?” She asked. David swallowed. Yes, this was his only course of action, the only thing that made sense to him. The only thing that had a chance to stop the pain. He needed this to stop hurting so much. He had a wound. A gaping, fucking horrifying wound, and he needed to cauterize it.

“I need another rebound.” He said, and Stevie seemed to consider his words reasonably.

“Okay, but that didn’t go so well, last time.” She said, and she was furrowing her brows in concern.

“Yeah, but last time I had Patrick to lose. This time, I’ve already lost him and I’m not getting him back.” David replied, trying to convince her. He wanted Stevie to be on board for this, but he didn’t need her to be.

“And you’re sure about that.” Was all she said. David tamped down a surge of frustration.

“Yes, I am. The door is closed on the whole Patrick situation, at least romantically. But maybe if I can just get over him… like that. Like, romantically--then maybe we could be friends.” He tried to explain.

“Makes total sense.” Stevie replied, a hint of her sarcasm returning to her tone.

“I’m sensing you have a differing opinion.” David sneered a little, as he waited for her response.

“I just want to make sure that this is what you really want.” She replied, and he held her gaze as he nodded vigorously. He felt the sting return to his eyes, and he tried to blink it away.

“Yes. Yes. I just want to get over him, Stevie, so it can stop hurting. I have to live with him, I have to sleep with him every night. I can’t keep living like this. I need to get over him. If he doesn’t want me, I need to find someone else.” He said, and his words were desperate, and completely truthful. Stevie regarded him for a moment, and then nodded.

“Okay. Where do we start?” She said suddenly, and David smiled, sagging a little in relief. It meant so much to him, to have Stevie’s support in this. He was making the right decision, he knew it. He pulled out his phone, and pressed his thumb to the scanner.
“So I was thinking we start with Tindr and Grindr?” He said, his voice turning up at the end in question. It felt… a little skeezy. But also, maybe skeezy was exactly what David needed right now. It was hard to tell, especially with the self destructive spiral David had found himself in, recently. But it felt right, to David’s current mindset. So he was going for it.

“So you just want to fuck, then.” Stevie said, and it wasn’t posed as a question, but it still was. But he didn’t detect any judgement in her tone. She was just clarifying.

“For now, maybe.” He replied, honestly. He’d be safe about it. But guy, girl, he didn’t care. He just wanted to find someone cute that could even just temporarily get David’s mind off his gorgeous roommate that he was very potentially in unrequited love with. David didn’t know. He had no scope of reference, no method of comparison. But he couldn’t stop thinking about Patrick, and he felt so bad that he forced himself to die a thousand deaths in his head every day, paying penance for hurting him the way he had. Was that love?

“Sweet, let’s make you a profile!” Stevie replied, enthusiastic. And David smiled. He’d actually had a little fun, for a few minutes at least. They’d created two profiles, one for each app, and he’d started getting matches right away. There were more people online in this relatively small town than he would have expected. A lot were students, some from the local Community College, Sir Sandford Fleming, but many appeared to be townies, or at least people that lived in the town but didn’t attend either school. They had some fun for a while, swiping right and left on the different profiles. Chatting with a couple people he matched with.

In the end, they’d secured him a date for that night. Although date was probably stretching it, a little. It was likely a booty call, but they were at least starting off at a bar. So technically it was a date. It was with a surprisingly hot townie, some guy named Ryan, who had a six pack and startling blue eyes. If that was really him in the picture.

“You’re sure you want to do this?” Stevie had asked one final time, as David eventually got up to leave. He gave her a look, and she raised her hands in defense. “I completely support you, and you know how I feel about sex. But I just needed to ask.” She continued, and David softened.

“I’m sure.” He said, and then paused. “I think I’m sure.” He added, which, yeah okay, may not have given her the vote of confidence she was looking for. But he couldn’t help it. There was something about Stevie that just compelled David to tell the truth. He couldn’t hide anything from her. In four short weeks, she had quickly become his best friend. And once he learned what a best friend was, he realized he had never really had one before. She’d admitted the same. It was a very touching moment. Even David had been moved.

“Well. As long as you think you’re sure…” She said, but she was teasing, smirking at David. He smirked back.
“I’ll text you after. Or during, if I think he’s a serial killer. Patrick has a car, I give you permission to ask to borrow it, but only if I tell you my life is in danger.” He replied, and she laughed.

“Have fun.” She said, as David stepped out her door and into the hall. He turned around to face her.

“We shall see.” He replied, and then turned and pulled out the key to his own door, fitting it into the lock.

His room had been empty when he’d returned, he knew Patrick had a 2 hour lecture on Thursday evenings, so that was likely where he was. Actually, no. Patrick never skipped class, so that was exactly where he was. David wasn’t sure whether the lecture started at 6 or at 7, he couldn’t remember, probably because he and Patrick never really talked anymore. But he didn’t know, so he didn’t know whether to expect him back before he left or not. He hoped he wouldn’t. David was meeting the guy at 9, so he had to be on the 8:22 Trent Express bus down into town, or he’d be late, because at that time at night, they only left hourly.

David had gotten ready with a bit of a heavy heart. The guy he was meeting was supposedly pretty sexy, and appeared to be completely DTF. David didn’t know what the problem was. This was exactly what he was looking for, so he forced himself to go through with it. He picked out his nicest black sweater, the one he’d worn on his first day of Frosh week, and his tight grey jeans. He wore his shiny black Dr Martins with them, and a silver chain around his neck. His white t-shirt poked through, just barely visible around his neck.

He was just putting the finishing touches on his hair, when Patrick had walked in. David heard him, before he saw him, because he’d been facing away from the door, looking at a tabletop mirror set upon their desk.

“Oh, David. H-- Hey.” Patrick stuttered, and David heard that he had stopped moving. The room was quiet and still, like Patrick had frozen. “Are you… going out?” Patrick asked, eventually, and David twisted in his chair to face him.

“I’m going on a date, actually.” He said, and he tried to keep his voice level. He wasn’t saying it to hurt Patrick, because he didn’t think that Patrick cared enough to be able to be hurt by it. Instead, David was saying it, half in an attempt to show Patrick that he wasn’t pathetic, that he could keep living without him. And maybe-sort of to make him just a tiny bit jealous. If that was even possible, anymore. Usually to be jealous, you had to care. And Patrick had barely even talked to
“Oh.” Patrick said, and he remained there, frozen. He hadn’t even put down his laptop bag, yet. He was sort of blinking at David, and there was something in his wide-eyed gaze that unsettled David. Suddenly, David was feeling a lot less right about what he was doing, and he wasn’t sure why.

“Yeah, so, I might not be back until late.” He said, feeling shaken, leaving out the *if at all* part. That wouldn’t have been in good taste, even if Patrick no longer cared about him like that.

“Umm, okay.” Patrick said, sort of dumbly. David still didn’t know what was going on with him. They just looked at each other for a minute. It was the most eye contact they’d made in three weeks. Up until now, Patrick had been avoiding his gaze at all costs. Sometimes David caught him looking at him, but he’d always look away immediately, once he realized he’d been caught. It looked like Patrick wanted to say something, but he didn’t. Eventually, the silence became too awkward to bear.

“So…” David tried, not sure what to say, but Patrick was already cutting him off.

“Who are you going out with?” He asked, and David was a little taken aback. It was the most personal question that Patrick had asked him, since before the Rachel incident. These days, they talked shallowly about their classes, or room maintenance, or about non-personal neutral subjects when hanging out together as part of a group.

“Just somebody I met.” David answered, evasively. Not wanting to answer at all, but feeling he had to, because he’d been asked directly.

Patrick’s eyes were a little wide, and if David wasn’t crazy, they looked upset. Shaken. But that was impossible. Patrick didn’t *care* anymore. David reminded himself of that. And as if to punctuate the thought, Patrick seemed to shake off the look, and he casually moved to set his bag onto his bed. His entire demeanor changed, in an instant.

“That’s good, that’ll be good for you. I hope you have fun, David.” Patrick said, and he was *so casual*, he sat down and then laid down on his bed, leaning against his pillow, stretched out with his hands behind his head. He just looked up at David, smiling coolly. And okay, *what the fuck*. If David had had his wits about him, he would have been suspicious about just how casual Patrick was being, he would have seen the bullshit for what it was, identified the pain behind his eyes.
But he didn’t notice any of that. Instead, he was focused on the fact that Patrick didn’t seem to care at all that he was going on a date. And he found that that was not a good feeling at all. Goddamn, David needed to get over Patrick. Because it was clear Patrick was over him. He turned around, and checked himself in the mirror. His hair was good enough.

“Okay, good then. If you think I should go.” He said, turning back to Patrick, and he didn’t know why he’d said it. The words had just come out, and David was left shocked by them, but he held his breath as he looked at Patrick and waited for his answer.

“It’s not up to me.” He said, sounding a little exasperated.

“You didn’t answer--”

“David. If you want to go, I think you should go.” Patrick said, cutting him off. David was rocked by this, but he also realized that Patrick’s answer had been a little noncommittal.

“Okay, but--”

“David.” Patrick cut him off, effectively ending the conversation. The longest, most personal conversation they’d had in three weeks. David was reeling. He didn’t know how to feel. Patrick had basically confirmed what David had told Stevie, that he didn’t care. He was encouraging David to go out with someone else. That should have been enough to ease the guilt this date had strangely caused to build inside David. He had no reason to feel guilty. Patrick didn’t care.

Still unsettled, David got to his feet. “Okay then, I’m going.” He said, and looked to Patrick one last time. And to his surprise, he watched as that cool, nonchalant demeanor crumbled a little, and his eyes turned wide and expressive. They held each other’s gaze a moment.

“David.” Patrick said, and there was a break in his voice that made David’s chest ache. “You look good.” He added, and David almost fell over. The words were soft, and vulnerable, and he punctuated them with this crooked little shy smile. Then Patrick took a breath, and added “Have a good time.” And David just nodded, until his brain and vocal chords seemed to catch up.

“Yeah, mmhmm. Okay.” He said, and then David grabbed his wallet, and hurried from the room. The bus stop was over by the library, he was cutting it close anyways, and it was a good idea to hurry. But that wasn’t the reason that David practically ran from that room. He had thought he had been so sure of the signals Patrick had been sending, and then right at the eleventh hour, he pulled
He tried to focus, to remember what he was doing. He was getting over Patrick. He needed to get over Patrick. He had a date, with—barring any unfortunate catfishing scenarios—an extremely good looking guy. He needed to stop thinking about Patrick. No matter what his eyes had been telling him, before he’d left, his words had told him to go on the date, and “have fun”. And David planned on having fun.

What had Patrick done? Had he seriously sent David off on a date with a smile and instructions to “have fun”? What was he thinking? He’d wanted to sprint after David, when the regret had washed over him, a minute after he’d left. To tell him he’d changed his answer. David had asked him, if he thought he should go, and the answer was no. The answer was of course not, he should stay with Patrick. In Patrick’s arms. They didn’t need anyone but each other.

But obviously Patrick couldn’t say that. The whole reason he hadn’t broken down and tried to bridge their divide sooner was because he was trying to respect David’s boundaries, to follow his lead. Not to pressure him into coming back to him or move faster than he was comfortable moving. So why should that change, now that David was wanting to date other people? If Patrick really wanted to follow David’s lead, it was time to put up or shut up. He had to be cool with this. He had to respect David’s wishes. If this was what David wanted, Patrick had to live with it. He couldn’t try to stop him. David didn’t owe him anything, David was free to date who he wanted. Patrick had lost his chance to have a say in that.

But holy fuck, it was like having his heart ripped out all over again. But at the same time, in this perverse sort of way, it was also the best night he’d had in weeks, because it had been the most that he and David had spoken since before Rachel got there. The most eye contact they’d shared. The most intimate conversation they’d shared by far, no matter how painful it was.

Patrick did a lot of thinking, that evening, almost entirely about David. He’d tried to get an early start on a paper he’d just been assigned that day, keener that he was, but he found he couldn’t focus very well. He kept seeing David, looking back at him. Asking him if he thought he should go on the date. Asking him, Patrick. Like he was supposed to say no, or something?

Oh God, did David want me to say no? Patrick thought, suddenly, awfully. He put down his pen. He wasn’t going to get any work done tonight. It was alright. The paper wasn’t due for another
week, and he’d already finished all his other work. Patrick decided to pack his stuff away and get ready for bed early that night. Stevie and Twyla had come knocking, a bottle of Jack in Stevie’s hand that she waved at him, trying to entice him out. But he’d said no, he just wanted to stay in tonight. To mope. Though he didn’t tell them that.

He’d turned on a playoff basketball game, though he didn’t care about either team so he didn’t watch much. Basketball wasn’t really his sport, anyways. He spent the time thinking about David, instead. About their relationship. What it had been, what it was now. Why they would probably never get back what they’d lost.

And then it came to him. Why couldn’t they get it back. Sure, maybe some things would be different. David was dating other people, and didn’t want Patrick in a romantic way. So he would have to control his hopes and expectations, understand that this time, things would have to be strictly platonic. Not that they necessarily hadn’t been, before. But even Patrick had to admit, they’d been blurring the lines a lot.

But Patrick couldn’t see why, if they kept those lines very sharply in focus, and not blurry at all, why they couldn’t make a closer friendship work. He thought of the way David had asked him his opinion tonight, and thought that maybe David was ready to let Patrick back into his life, too. Patrick had committed himself to waiting for David’s lead, to only taking steps forward in their relationship that matched the steps that David took first.

And in Patrick’s mind, David had taken a step tonight. And yes, Patrick was feeling destroyed inside, jealous beyond compare. But he’d learned a strong lesson on jealousy, these past weeks. About how it can burn bright, and be powerfully destructive, if you let it. It could make you do stupid things, if you let it consume you. But just like a fire, it usually would burn itself out, over time. And then you were left only with the ashes of whatever it was you let burn down. Ashes, and usually, regret. Patrick wasn’t going to let his jealousy burn down this friendship. Not again. Not if there was a chance that Patrick could have David back in his life again, in a meaningful way. Even if it wasn’t the way he wanted.

So he waited, and eventually, just after eleven, David returned.

When David realized that Patrick was still awake, he’d paused in the doorway, freezing a little and looking back at Patrick with wide eyes. Patrick took in his appearance (his messy hair, mostly, and his tired eyes) and felt that jealous fire ignite into a roaring blaze in his chest, but with a strong effort of will, Patrick forced it down. He would only get to keep David in his life, if he learned to control it. So he forced himself to smile, a little crookedly, and raised his eyebrows at David. “So, how’d it go?” He asked, and he even managed to make his voice sound half-normal. He could do this, he thought, as he braced himself for the answer.
David seemed to consider him a second, and he appeared a little scared or maybe unsure, then his brows furrowed a little and he replied. “Umm, I don’t know. Okay, I guess. He wants to see me again, so…” David said, and again, Patrick beat down the instinct to beat his chest and growl, go find that guy and fight him, or some other stupid primitive shit. Patrick wasn’t used to this, he’d never felt anything so powerful before, never experienced jealousy like this. But he reminded himself that he had to put up with it, or not have David in his life at all. Those were his two options. And he was picking David. He was always going to pick David.

“And do you want to see him again?” Patrick asked. He kept his voice neutral, but interested. He tried to convey that he was there for David, that he could feel comfortable answering him truthfully. He didn’t want any hint of accusation to bleed through into his tone at all, or he knew David would get his back up, and they’d end up fighting.

David regarded him for another long minute, then he sighed and shrugged. “I’m not sure. Maybe.” He answered. “We’ll see.” He added, and Patrick tried to focus on the fact that at least David clearly hadn’t fallen in love tonight. Patrick could tell. Whoever David had been spending time with tonight, he hadn’t left much of an impact. Good, Patrick thought. Even though he had lost the chance to date David Rose, it didn’t mean he wanted to see other people date him if he didn’t have to, either. Call him selfish. He was only human.

Patrick let David get ready for bed after that, but when he returned from the bathroom, face scrubbed and moisturized and teeth washed, Patrick reached out to grab his arm, stopping himself before he actually made contact with him. He pulled his hand back towards him, somewhat embarrassed, not knowing where the impulse had come from.

David had noticed, and he’d stopped, looking at Patrick inquisitively.

“Hey, David. Wait. Are you-- is it okay if we talk?” He asked nervously, swallowing and looking up into his roommates beautiful brown eyes, holding the gaze. David’s eyes widened a little, and he bit his lips in between his teeth before nodding just a little.

“Umm, sure. Yeah. That’s a good idea.” David agreed tensely. Patrick pulled his legs up closer, sitting cross-legged on his bed, and indicated that David sit near the foot. With just a little hesitation, David sat down, and tucked his legs up under him as well. They sat, facing each other, separated by a few feet. As Patrick looked into David’s eyes, he found himself desperate to close that distance, but he didn’t dare.

The silence stretched on. David was waiting for Patrick to say whatever it was he wanted to say. Patrick wanted to say it. He just had to get up the nerve. He took a deep fortifying breath, looking down at his bedspread, and then back up again at David with more determined eyes.
“David, I’ve missed you.” He said, simply. He let the statement hang. He watched as David took in this information, watched the way he’d leaned back a little, as if the words had knocked him back, a shocked and confused look prevalent on his face. And then he smiled. That crooked smile, that Patrick had seen so many times during their first week together. And Patrick’s heart sang.

“You have?” David asked, and there was so much hope in those two words, Patrick felt an ache in his soul. Like an atrophied muscle regaining use, Patrick’s heart ached as it swelled, but it was a good ache. One that reminded him he was alive and capable of love.

He just had to keep reminding himself that this was only going to be a friendship. That maybe it was okay to start getting his hopes up for more than they’d had these past few weeks, but not for anything more than friendship. But it was okay. It was okay because David was smiling at Patrick again.

“Yeah.” He replied, and returned David's shy smile. His voice broke on the word, on the raw truth of it. “Yeah, David, I have.” He added, and David’s eyes shone, possibly with witheld tears.

“I’ve missed you too.” David said in return, his voice breathy, barely more than a whisper. He looked like he was holding back a big smile, and that made Patrick more happy than he could have described.

“I’m sorry we--”

“Let’s not.” David said quickly, interrupting him. Patrick furrowed his eyebrows worriedly.

“What do you mean?” He asked, unsure. He wanted to lean forward and put his hand on David’s knee, but he held the impulse back.

“I mean, let’s just not do the whole apology thing. You’re sorry, I’m sorry, we’re both sorry. Can we just be friends again?” David asked, suddenly, and Patrick couldn’t help it. He broke out into the widest grin, and gripped his knees with his hands to stop himself from reaching out to touch David, to pull him into a hug. Because Patrick was still going to follow David’s lead. He wasn’t going to touch him, until David touched him first. He wasn’t going to push himself on him, he would respect his boundaries and go at his pace, even if it killed him.

Patrick nodded, and tried and failed at holding back his smile. “Yeah, okay, we can do that.”
Patrick agreed, and David beamed at him. Silence fell for a moment, as they looked at each other, into each other’s eyes, and suddenly Patrick found himself asking, “So do you want to talk about tonight, or?” He really didn’t want to, he felt the jealous beast in his chest snarl at the very thought, but he’d just agreed to be David’s friend, and friends talked about who they were dating. If they wanted to. God he hoped that David didn’t want to.

“No, I don’t think we need to… talk about…” David said, shaking his head and trailing off, looking away at the wall and smiling shyly. He laughed, and looked back at Patrick, who was smiling.

“Okay, sounds good.” Patrick agreed, meaning it. It actually sounded very good. They sat there another minute, looking at each other, when another question popped into Patrick’s head. “Do you want to watch a movie?” He asked, suddenly very hopeful. They hadn’t watched anything together just the two of them since frosh week, and even if Patrick didn’t think they’d end up cuddling like last time, he thought it was a real step in the right direction, anyways. David smiled and nodded at Patrick’s question.

“Can it be a Sandra Bullock vehicle?” David asked, and Patrick laughed.

“Only if it can be 28 Days, that one’s got the baseball player in it.” Patrick replied, remembering back to when Rachel used to put movies like that on for them to watch. And they would actually watch them, Patrick not being all that interested in sex or making out. Especially when a movie was on. Not anymore. Patrick had a feeling that he would be thinking about sex a lot while he watched this film. Though he wouldn’t be acting on it, of course.

“Okay, fine. But don’t say I never compromise, because I wanted to watch Miss Congeniality.” David replied, and Patrick laughed.

“Okay David.” He said, and David smiled at him, shiny eyed, and then they moved to get set up. They sat with their backs to the wall on Patrick’s bed, with the laptop between them. They still hadn’t touched.

They watched the entire movie, even though it ended close to 1am. David was clearly very tired, and Patrick remembered how adorable he found sleepy David, and had to once again grasp at his knee to control the impulse to reach out and touch him, somehow. Patrick had class in the morning, but not until 11, so that wasn’t going to be a problem. But David had one at 10, and he knew he’d be sleepy and grumpy.

“Is it going to be worth it, when you’re tired tomorrow?” He asked David, as he stretched and
yawned beside him. In a thick, exhausted voice, David smiled and leaned his head back on the wall, closing his eyes.

“It’s always worth it for Sandra Bullock.” He answered, eyes still closed. Patrick chuckled. Silence stretched for a moment, and Patrick was wondering if David had fallen asleep, when David spoke again, his voice quiet and vulnerable. “And to spend time with you.” He didn’t crack an eye open to peek at Patrick, and Patrick was sort of glad, because he knew he was blushing hard. He was probably beet red. But he swallowed his nerves, and whispered back.

“I liked spending time with you too.” David’s only response was a smile, but it was enough. Patrick felt encouraged, and felt compelled to continue. “I want to be your friend David, I’m so glad we can be friends again. You can date who you want, but I want you to know I’m here for you.” Patrick added, the words coming from his heart, and David finally opened his eyes. They looked at each other for a moment, and David’s smile crept over to the corner of his mouth.

“Thank you Patrick.” He said quietly. They sat there for another long moment, before David began to sit up. “Well, I have class in the morning…” He said, and Patrick nodded.

“Yeah, we should--we should get to bed.” He agreed.

Already having brushed his teeth and gotten ready to sleep, David crossed the room, and Patrick found himself holding his breath. Waiting. He laid back, and watched David openly, while his back was turned. He watched, and he waited. And then he felt his heart skip a beat, as he saw David reach behind him, to pull the shirt he was wearing up and over his head.

David’s muscular back was always a beautiful sight to behold, but it was especially gorgeous tonight, because of what it meant. It was the first night David was sleeping shirtless since frosh week, and the message wasn’t lost on Patrick. David was feeling comfortable again. Things were getting better. So much better.

Stripped down to just his black boxer briefs, David had slid underneath his silky trillion-thread count sheets, and sadly most of that skin stopped being visible. But Patrick knew it was there, and that was enough. He smiled to himself, in the darkness, and looked over at to where David lay. Patrick could see one of his bare arms, folded over top of his white comforter, and he found himself thinking about touching that skin. But then, in a mental blow like being hit by a hammer, he remembered that someone else had likely been touching that skin tonight. And jealousy flared up inside him like gas being thrown into a fire.

But this time, Patrick wasn’t going to let it get the better of him. He was ready for it. He rode
through the wave, and did his best to remember the amazing things that had happened tonight. His relationship with David had improved by leaps and bounds. Before tonight, David wouldn’t even meet his eye. They hadn’t talked about anything deeper than school work in weeks, and they certainly hadn’t spent any alone time together doing anything other than sleep, with their backs facing each other in silence.

That was already one major difference. Tonight, as they got settled in bed and ready to sleep, they lay facing one another. A silence had fallen, but it was comfortable for the first time since their first week sharing the room. “Goodnight, David.” Patrick had said, eventually, and when David replied, his voice was thick with sleepiness.

“Mm, night, Patrick.”

Patrick tried to keep his eyes open, and on David, for as long as he could. It had been so long since he’d slept facing forward, since he’d had no opportunity to look at him. But his eyelids quickly grew heavy, and soon, Patrick felt himself drifting off.

But a couple hours later, just after 3am, Patrick found himself awake again. He didn’t know why he was waking up, at first. He had vague memories of a good dream, although the details were already difficult to put his finger on. He’d rolled over in his sleep, onto his left side to face the wall, so when he opened his eyes, all he saw was darkness. He laid still for a minute, trying to drift back off, and that’s when he heard it. It was the sound of a tissue being pulled from a box, and then the sound of the box sliding, because it was close to empty. David was awake.

Suddenly, Patrick wished he was facing the other direction so he could see him, but he didn’t want to move, to let David know he was awake. He waited for David to blow his nose, but it didn’t happen. Instead, he heard a creak, and a shuffling sound, like David was rolling over, or shifting in bed.

Patrick didn’t know why, but he found his heart was beating a little faster, and he worked to control his breathing, so as not to alert David to his wakeful status. It felt important. So he laid there, and he waited, although he didn’t know for what. And then he heard it. And it was all Patrick could do not to gasp when he did.

The softest, neediest little stifled moan, and Patrick’s eyes sprung open, his speeding heart racing ever faster. There was an instant surge of blood to his cock, but he strained his ears to listen harder. And then there it was. Muffled under the thick down comforter, the unmistakable sound of skin on skin.
Holy fuck. David was getting himself off.

Patrick’s arousal turned to 100 in an instant, his cock hardening the rest of the way and already aching to be touched. But he couldn’t move. He didn’t dare move. Because then David might stop. He might be embarrassed. He might be furious. They could end up in a fight, and… suddenly, Patrick was terrified to be caught, but there was something exhilarating about it as well. And he was so turned on.

David was so fucking sexy, even fully clothed in the middle of the day, doing nothing hotter than fixing his hair in the mirror or paging through a magazine. Patrick had already been having a hard enough time containing his attraction to his tall, dark, handsome roommate enough as it was. But now that he was adding in the knowledge of what David sounded like, when he… the soft little gasps, the stifled groans, the soft little whines. Patrick thought he might explode with need. He felt a wet spot forming on the front of his (now very tight) boxers, his aching cock dripping. He was desperate to touch it, but he didn’t dare. He didn’t dare. He thought he might come, anyways. Just from the sound of it.

David was obviously trying to be quiet. Even his strokes sounded tentative, like he was doing it as gingerly and quietly as possible. But Patrick still heard. He heard everything. And he’d never been so Goddamned turned on in his entire life. Once again, he wished desperately he’d been laying on his other side when he woke up. He imagined what the sight must look like, he imagined watching David, through his lashes, pretending to sleep. He imagined David’s head tilting back, his eyes scrunched closed, those beautiful full lips parted as he panted quietly. Oh God, he seriously might come untouched, if he kept picturing things like that.

It crossed his mind that maybe this was wrong, maybe he shouldn’t be listening (although he really didn’t know what option he had in the present situation). Perhaps he should have alerted David to his being awake before it got to this point. Maybe he should feel bad about this little bit of voyeurism that was going on, no matter how turned on it made Patrick. But then he thought, no.

No, David had been the one to make the rules, when it came to the room. He’d explicitly said to keep “personal time” to the showers or bathrooms, or when they were alone in the room. If he was doing this here, now, it was because he was okay with getting caught. He was okay with Patrick hearing, maybe even seeing. The thought gave Patrick a thrill, and his cock throbbed. He was desperate to reach down and grip himself tightly, but laid stock still, biting his lip and listening.

A part of him wondered why David was doing this, why he felt the need, if he’d already gotten off with some stranger earlier in the night. But that line of thinking brought up unpleasant feelings, so he focused instead on the sound of David’s hand, softly slapping against himself. Those little barely-audible gasps and hitches in his breath. He was so fucking turned on he didn’t know what
he was going to do with himself. Laying there, doing nothing, not even touching himself, was about
the hardest thing he’d ever done.

That wasn’t to say he wasn’t loving every second of it.

After a few minutes, David’s breathing became a little harsher, more erratic, and Patrick listened
intently as David came, presumably into the tissue he’d taken earlier. Patrick just about bit a hole
through his lip, and when it was over, he slowly forced his jaw to unclench, to let go of the swollen
flesh. He was careful not to breathe too harshly. It was hard, because he felt close to coming
himself, and he still hadn’t even been touched.

It took a long time getting back to sleep that night. Patrick had never felt safe, moving or
adjusting in his bed, for fear that David might think he had been awake and heard him. So he’d
eventually, after a very long time, fallen asleep without ever having even been able to adjust
himself. It was not ideal, but he was okay with it. Because fuck. Patrick just really didn’t want
David to know he’d heard, because he wanted David to do it again. And if he made him
embarrassed or to worried about it, he wouldn’t do it again. Oh God Patrick wanted him to do it
again.

The next morning, Patrick had needed to take an extra long shower to take care of himself, after
the night he’d had. When he returned to the room, neither of them spoke of the previous evening,
although thankfully the tension between them seemed greatly diminished. David smiled at him,
and made eye contact, and they went down to breakfast together, so that was a major
improvement. But they still hadn’t touched. That still seemed like a barrier that Patrick wasn’t able to (or
shouldn’t) breach, without David setting the first example.

So even if things were better than they were, they were far from entirely back to normal.
Intimacy and trust continued to re-develop between them, but very, very slowly. Patrick continued
to follow David’s lead to the letter, as the days and eventually weeks passed. With the rare
exception of very specific nights, where boundaries would be pushed and limits were tested. These
nights, the rules of other nights didn’t seem to apply, and they would talk more deeply, stare more
longingly. And many of them ended with Patrick staying up late into the night, pretending to sleep,
waiting and hoping for David to quietly jerk himself off. He almost always did. Patrick almost
wondered if David knew he was waiting for him, and he did it for him. He liked to imagine so.

He waited for these moments, he dreamed about them. He looked forward to every one of these
special nights, because David allowed him closer than on any other nights. He answered his
questions more honestly, and asked questions in return. And it didn’t hurt that almost every one of
them ended the same way. With David taking care of himself, in the middle of the night, when he
thought Patrick was sleeping.
Patrick had learned to sleep on his right side again, facing towards David, so that he could watch him, though his lashes. Never moving. Pretending to sleep. Sometimes, he wondered if David knew he was watching. Sometimes, he thought he did. But that just made it hotter. Patrick looked forward to these nights so much, it hurt. Which was all kinds of fucked up, because these nights were David’s date nights.

Patrick dreaded and anticipated them in almost equal measures. His jealousy had been harder to control than he’d thought, and never really got any easier to deal with, but the muscle he used to control it was becoming strong, now. He was getting used to that familiar pain, and was more easily able to shove it aside to enjoy the benefits and kickbacks he seemed to receive by way of David’s date nights.

On these nights, David would come back into the room, usually just after 11, and he’d smile shyly, and Patrick would pretend to ignore the way his hair was messed up, and he’d smile back and invite David to sit down on his bed. And David always would. And then sometimes they’d watch a movie, and sometimes they’d just talk, the whole night, just talking. About anything and everything, except David’s dating life. That was something neither one of them was willing to talk about, and left out of any discussion they’d have. It was an unspoken rule, but in Patrick’s mind, it was explicit.

They still never touched, but slowly, on these nights, the intimacy returned. Usually, it had faded by the next morning. But after some time, traces of it seemed to remain. And things got better, even on days where David wasn’t disappearing on some date.

Sometimes Patrick had questions about the dates, but he didn’t dare ask David. And Stevie and Twyla were useless. He’d tried grilling them, but they had taken a very firm ‘Switzerland’ stance, when it came to David and Patrick’s relationship, and Patrick had to kind of respect that. They would be a lot to handle, especially when Stevie and Twyla would be subject to both sides, and picking sides could potentially break up their little group.

So Patrick resolved himself to living with his questions being unanswered, and just enjoying what parts of David the universe saw fit to bestow him with. Because Patrick would take David in any way he got him. He was in love with him, he knew that now, part way through October. It seemed to be a love destined to end in tragedy, but it was love just the same. Patrick had stopped denying it weeks before.

He loved everything about David Rose, from his crooked little smile, to his sharp mind, to the way he could eat enough food for three people and seemingly never gain a pound. He even loved the way he committed to the grudge he had against Patrick. Patrick still couldn’t believe David hadn’t touched him yet, what with how far they’d come with each other on their special nights, and that
took some kind of dedication to a grudge. Patrick had to respect that. Even if he wished there was something he could do to change it.

The week before Midterms, and Thanksgiving holiday weekend, Patrick had found himself growing impatient. He’d been sitting there, at his desk, trying to study but not finding the focus in him to retain any of the information he was reading. Instead, he was ruminating on how David was off on a date, and how it wasn’t with him. The jealous beast in Patrick’s chest was snarling, louder than usual that evening, and to make matters worse, Patrick’s dick was obviously very confused because it kept getting hard, like it was anticipating the evening to come. But that wasn’t the most pleasant feeling, when he also felt so jealous he wanted to punch a hole through the wall.

He didn’t know why this wasn’t getting easier. He thought time and repetition made everything easier. Like practice. He should be very practiced at controlling his jealousy, by now. Fuck, he should honestly be over David by now, although that probably wasn’t going to happen any time soon, considering Patrick now knew he was in love with the guy.

Patrick had considered going on a date of his own, and seeing if it might make David jealous in return. He’d even downloaded grindr onto his phone. But when the download finished, and that little icon popped onto his screen, he’d just stared at it in distaste. He uninstalled it immediately, never even opened it. No, he wasn’t ready. If David didn’t want him, well, that sucked. But it didn’t mean he had to go running to the first available guy he could find from the fucking internet.

He knew that was how David was finding his dates. Well, he didn’t know, because they never talked about that stuff and Stevie and Twyla were lockboxes in terms of the information they knew and shared, but Patrick knew. And sometimes, he kind of hoped it was the case. He hated the idea of David with anyone other than himself, but he thought he preferred him dating around, meeting new people each week that he didn’t care about, rather than dating one person again and again.

He hadn’t gotten up the courage to ask, and David hadn’t volunteered the answer. But Patrick hated the idea of David with a boyfriend or girlfriend. That was so much worse than casual sex with randoms he found in dating apps, somehow. Because if he was dating someone, it meant he liked them more than Patrick. And that hurt more than he cared to admit.

Patrick looked around the room. Everywhere he looked, there was evidence of David. Which made sense, considering it was his room too. But it wasn’t making it easy to focus, to study like Patrick should be. Because he apparently loved misery, Patrick leaned over and reached to David’s side of the long desk, and grabbed the jar of his scented body lotion. With just a little bit of shame, he twisted the cap off and took a deep breath, smelling the delicious scent of David. Oak and Redcurrant. Patrick had never smelled anything like it before, and he hoped he never would again.
This smell to him would forever be linked to the handsome roommate that had stolen his heart.

He felt another surge of jealousy rush though him at the thought that David was off with some other person right now. And not even the promise of another special night of closeness could make him feel better about that fact. Not even the promise of getting to watch David get himself off under the covers was helping. *Fuck* he just wished so badly sometimes that he could go back and change everything about the day that Rachel had showed up. It had ruined everything, shattered a precious, beautiful thing into pieces. And sometimes, it seemed, putting something back together was much harder than it had been to build in the first place.

Patrick replaced the cap and put the body creme back where he got it, and looked around the room. He had a sudden urge to be anywhere but there. He was never going to concentrate, surrounded by reminders of David. No, he needed to leave. He got up suddenly, grabbed his jacket and slid into his old comfy skate shoes that he never bothered to re-lace. He grabbed his Economics textbook, and considered leaving his cell phone behind, but grabbed it at the last second instead. As much as he wanted to unplug, he didn’t want to miss a message from David. He was out with a stranger, after all. What if things didn’t go well, and he needed him? Patrick would never forgive himself if he’d missed a call like that. So he set the phone to vibrate, because he was going to the library, and he headed into the chilly October night.

The library wasn’t far. He had to walk through the main Lady Eaton building a little, and then over a cement bridge that ran over a road, to the main quad. The quad was two levels, separated by a section of stone bleachers and a long staircase. Patrick hopped down the stairs quickly to the first landing, and sat on the railing and slid down the second. The library loomed above him from the other side of the lower quad, the glass windows that surrounded it glowing in the darkness of the evening. Patrick crossed the space quickly, and pushed open the door, letting himself inside.

Patrick didn’t go to the library often. He had been opting more to study in his room, mostly because being in his room meant being close to David. But looking around, Patrick could see the appeal of this place. It was large and bright, quiet and friendly. He looked up, and could see all the way to the roof, three floors up, because the center of each floor remained open. There was an elevator that brought you up the floors, and a large staircase leading up as well as down into the basement. The first floor had a large section of computer banks off to one side, and Patrick was tempted to go sit down there to pass the time. But he’d brought his book, and he intended to study, so he headed up to the second floor where he knew there were lots of these little study booths lining the windows.

One of the beautiful things about the Trent Beta Library was the way one corner of it jutted itself out into the river it bordered. Patrick thought it might be nice to sit in one of the booths that bordered the river, because the view was probably something else tonight. The sky was dark and full of stars, and the dark water would be shimmering and reflecting their light. It just seemed like it would be a nice place to sit, so Patrick had headed upstairs in search of a booth.
It was after 9pm, so the library was even quieter than usual. It would remain open until 11, though, so Patrick still had time left to study. At this time of night, it seemed to be mostly older students around, probably studying for much higher-stakes tests than the basic ones Patrick had been preparing for. In all honesty, even now a week before his exam, he had probably already studied enough to do pretty well. He wasn’t finding the course overly challenging, and he had always been a diligent student. But that diligence drove him to study some more, because it seemed to be the responsible thing to do. Besides, David was on a date. What else was Patrick going to do?

The second floor was almost empty. He passed stacks of books and a section of pine study tables, only one of which a student sat at, slumped forward onto their books, fast asleep. He moved quietly, with his destination in mind. Then finally, he turned a corner, and he could see the work booths lining the tall glass windows, and one in the very corner, where two walls of windows came together, where the building jutted into the river. That’s where he wanted to-- damn.

It seemed like someone else had had the same idea. There was another student, sitting in the desk he had been hoping to sit at, and they were leaned forward, over a book, so that the back of the booth in front of them blocked their face from view. Slightly disappointed, Patrick scoped out the rest of the booths, trying to pick the next best spot. It would be weird to choose the booth next to the stranger, considering every other spot was empty, so he thought he’d choose one on the southern side, so he wouldn’t have the glare of the LED bridge lights in his eyes.

He started to head in that direction, and got about fifteen feet, when he stopped in his tracks. He almost dropped his book, his fingers having gone slack for a second out of sheer shock, but he tightened his grip at the last second, catching it. His eyes went wide before his brows twisted together in confusion. At first, he thought he must be mistaken. But then it became clear he wasn’t. There, sitting at the desk and leaning over a textbook, one hand buried in his hair, mindlessly tugging at the roots, was--

“David?” Patrick asked, confused and surprised, and watched as his roommate’s head snapped up upon hearing his name. His eyes swept the space before quickly meeting Patrick’s, and then they widened, his entire face blanching. It was like a drain had been pulled, and all the colour in David’s face went down it all at once.

“...Patrick?” David replied, stumbling to his feet, clearly surprised to have been found. “What are you doing here?” He asked, and Patrick’s found himself a little incredulous at the question, and he gestured at David with his book.

“Me? What are you doing here?” He asked, completely at a loss. He’d been going crazy with jealousy all night because David had left to go on a date, but now he was finding him here, in the library. Had he even gone on the date at all?
David just stared back at him, and he looked a little glazed, like his brain had momentarily stalled out. Patrick waited for it to reboot. He wanted an answer.

“I, umm, I…” David stuttered, and Patrick found himself growing very impatient.

“You…” Patrick prompted.

“I…” Patrick sighed in frustration.

“Were you here the whole time? Did you even go on a date tonight?” Patrick asked, because that’s what he wanted to know. The look on David’s face was all the answer he needed, but he still waited for his response.

“I…” David hesitated. “No, I didn’t.” He finished, and he said the words quietly, sadly, ashamed. Good, Patrick thought, suddenly. He was glad David felt ashamed, because what the fuck? Had he known how painful it had been for Patrick, sitting in their room, thinking David was out on some hookup date with a random from Tindr or Grindr, when in fact, the entire time he’d been studying in the fucking Beta Library? A surge of anger washed over Patrick, but it was warring with an overwhelming sense of relief. The feeling was confusing, and overwhelming. He was so Goddamn relieved that David hadn’t been out hooking up with some random tonight, but at the same time he was angry that he had been led to believe that he was.

“You didn’t.” Patrick replied, deadpan. David grimaced, and held out his hands in a placating gesture.

“Okay, no, I didn’t. But in my defence--”

“Did you even go out on any of those other dates, either? Or did you come here, every time?” Patrick asked suddenly, interrupting David. He needed to know. Hope clashed with fear as he waited for his answer. He didn’t have to wait long. Again, David’s expressive face spoke the truth to Patrick before his words got the chance. “You didn’t.” Patrick choked, answering for David, his voice nothing more than a hoarse whisper. Which was appropriate, considering they were in a library.

“Okay, no… but just let me explain.”
“I think that would be a good idea.” Patrick replied, his voice rough with emotion. He was feeling a whole lot of things at that moment, and was left so off balance that he probably could have been knocked over with a feather. He looked for the closest thing to lean on, and found one of the pine tables to his right. Once he was settled against it, he looked back up at David, who had withheld tears in his eyes, and a panicked expression that made Patrick’s heart constrict, even in his current state.

David seemed frozen, and for a long moment, they just looked at one another. Then David broke the eye contact to look around. “Can we… go somewhere?” He was looking at something over Patrick’s shoulder, and he turned to see the sleeping student he’d passed on his way by. He turned back to David. He wanted to say no, to insist that right here, right now, David tell him everything. But they were in a library, and okay…

“Fine, let’s go down to the water.” Patrick suggested, and something in David softened just a hair. He nodded, and turned to collect his things. One of the nice things about the Beta Library, was that if you went down to the river side, it had a long set of concrete stairs that descended into the water. It was just downstream from the Ottonabee bridge, and it was really just an idyllic place for a late night talk.

As he and David descended the narrow steps, he remembered the first time he and David had come here. They’d held hands to steady each other as they walked down these same steps, on their way to go swimming in the river. It was now far too cold in mid-October for swimming, but it was still a nice temperature out at night, as long as you dressed properly. Patrick had his high school letterman jacket on, and David had a thick sweater, as usual. The two of them would be fine.

When they got down to the riverside, they put down their things and settled on the concrete steps, facing in towards one another, but with a couple feet between them. Patrick felt his heart beating fast and hard against his ribs, as he waited for David to say something. Inside, he found that the relief was winning out in the battle with anger, when it came to Patrick’s overriding emotion. But he still needed answers.

He was just thinking of saying something to prompt David along, when David took a deep breath. “What do you want to know?” He asked, and Patrick huffed a laugh.

“Are you kidding me, David?” He asked, and David sighed.

“Okay, I’m sorry. I just don’t know where to start.” He replied, and he sounded so anxious to Patrick that he found himself softening a little further.
“How about you start at the beginning.” He suggested, and then steeled himself for the question he was dying to ask. “Did you even sleep with Sebastien?” He asked, and he felt the hope rise up in him and threaten to drown him, but he was gutted all over again when he saw the look on David’s face.

“How about you start at the beginning.” He suggested, and then steeled himself for the question he was dying to ask. “Did you even sleep with Sebastien?” He asked, and he felt the hope rise up in him and threaten to drown him, but he was gutted all over again when he saw the look on David’s face.

“Unfortunately I did, yes.” He replied, and Patrick swallowed hard and nodded. Okay, it’s okay, he had already had time to deal with that one. He was just one guy, and David never saw him again. Patrick could handle one guy. At least, Patrick thought it was just one…

“But after that…” Patrick prompted and David leaned forward to hug his knees. “You didn’t…”

“No, I didn’t. I mean, I could have… I mean I had an actual date that first night. But I couldn’t go through with it. I came here instead.” David didn’t look at Patrick when he spoke. Instead, he looked out towards the rippling water of the river. But Patrick looked only at David. At his strong, handsome profile. And he watched the emotions that passed David’s face, and he started to feel that bubble of hope again. David didn’t go on any of those dates. None of them.

“You couldn’t go through with it.” Patrick echoed, sounding a little stunned, clarifying. David turned to look him in the eye. He held the gaze boldly before shaking his head just a little.

“No, Patrick, I couldn’t.” There was something in David’s words that took the air from Patrick’s lungs. He just gaped back at David in reply, and eventually nodded slightly.

“No, Patrick, I couldn’t.” There was something in David’s words that took the air from Patrick’s lungs. He just gaped back at David in reply, and eventually nodded slightly.

“Why did you say you--” Patrick needed to know the answer to this, but he couldn’t finish the question. David knew what he meant though. He looked out at the water before turning back to Patrick.

“At first I was embarrassed. I was on time for the bus to go on the date with that first guy, but I just… didn’t get on. I just… I just watched the bus leave. But I couldn’t come back here right away, not after I told you-- anyway..” David paused, and looked to Patrick to gauge his reaction. Patrick was trying to school his features into not revealing much, but he didn’t know how he was doing. He was the happiest he’d ever been, all at the same time at being furious at David for putting him through this. And on top of that, he felt guilty for being the root of everything to begin with. But mostly he was just so fucking relieved. But he didn’t want David to know that. He still had some explaining to do.

He knew the best way to get David to continue was to keep his mouth closed and wait for him to start talking in order to fill the silence. David hated a hanging silence. Besides, Patrick thought
David knew as well as he did that he was still owed a bit of an explanation. After a moment, it worked. David continued.

At first he just looked at Patrick, really intently. Then, he nodded slightly, as if deciding on something, then he blinked his eyes tightly shut and opened them again. Once open again, David’s dark eyes were determined and focused.

“Here’s the thing, Patrick. I was desperate to be friends with you again. I was ready.” David said quickly, and paused, as if he knew Patrick would need a second to absorb those words. He did. Patrick felt rocked by that news. “And I don’t mean fake friends, like we were pretending to be, for Stevie and Twyla’s sake. I mean close friends, like we were. Before. But I didn’t think you wanted to be friends anymore, so I--”

“David--” Patrick interrupted him, because he couldn’t help it. He tried to drench that one word, David’s name, in a gentle but firm reproach. Because he couldn’t stand to hear that David didn’t think he wanted to be friends anymore, because nothing in the world had ever been further from the truth.

“Well, I didn’t. You wouldn’t even look me in the eye. We never talked. I could tell, you were disgusted with me. For--”

“I wasn’t disgusted with you, David. I would never be disgusted with you.”

“Well that’s how I saw it. I thought you were. I just wanted to… move on.” David replied, and there was silence for a moment. Or, as close to silence as you could get, sitting next to a rushing river. The impact of David’s last words hit Patrick hard, right in the gut. He wanted to move on. Holy fuck, thank God he hadn’t gone through with his date that first night. What if he had, and he actually had moved on?

Patrick was so relieved to hear that David wanted to be friends again, that he had missed a good amount of the subtext of their conversation. He didn’t seem to have two brain cells to spare, to put together that “move on” probably had a much deeper meaning than just friendship. But it was lost on Patrick in the moment, he was just so overjoyed that David wanted to be his friend again. Properly, this time. He said he wanted to be close again, and he didn’t go on any of those dates. Nothing had ever made Patrick happier.

“David, I wanted to be friends again too. Like we were before. So badly. Then why did you keep--”
“Because when I got back that first night, the night you thought I went on a date... you were nice to me for the first time in weeks. You looked at me, you talked to me, you invited me on your bed and we watched that movie...”

“Not just any movie, a Sandra Bullock vehicle.” Patrick interrupted, not able to help himself, and David gave him one breathy chuckle in acknowledgement.

“But yeah, that night was just so... well, it was really great, Patrick. And...” David’s words were soft and vulnerable, and he looked away at the end, apparently unable to continue. But Patrick wanted to hear what he was going to say next.

“Yeah?” He prompted, urging David to continue. He was trying and failing not to think the other things David would do on those nights. Late at night, long after they'd gone to bed.

“And I wanted it to happen again.” He said, and Patrick swallowed against the strong feelings these words brought out in him. He couldn’t help the rising flare of frustration that burst out of him, though, a second later. As their meaning really settled into his brain. The frustration wasn’t really geared towards David, as much as the situation they’d found themselves in in general. But he couldn’t help himself directing a bit of it towards David, anyways, even if he didn’t mean to.

“I just don’t get why you didn’t talk to me, David. Instead you just let me think you were hooking up with all these people?” He said, and he ran his hand through his slightly shaggy hair.

“I couldn’t talk to you!” David replied, his voice rising and face twisting, like that was the most insane thing Patrick could have even suggested. “You hated me, Patrick. You weren’t even looking at me, before the first time.”

“I didn’t hate you. I was following your lead, David! You weren’t looking at me, either! Do you know how much I wanted to talk to you?” Patrick asked, looking at David with lost eyes. Wanting to reach out to touch him, but holding back, because he wasn’t sure that was okay anymore. David had said he wanted to be friends. And Patrick thought if they were to do it right this time, they should probably do a lot less touching. Even if he hated the thought of it.

“Then why didn’t you!” David asked back, his voice rising and sounding equally frustrated with Patrick.

“Because you weren’t talking to me!” Patrick cried in return. God they were idiots! Both of
“I only wasn’t talking to you because you weren’t talking to me!” David replied, and Patrick couldn’t help it, he let out a hysterical laugh, and wiped a tear from his eye. He didn’t know if it was from sadness or joy.

“Oh my God, David. Are you telling me that—”

“That maybe this was all some big terrible misunderstanding, caused by the fact that neither of us are clearly any good at communicating? Yeah, possibly.” David cut in, and Patrick laughed again.

“I can’t believe this.” He said, shaking his head incredulously. “So you kept going on these—” Patrick paused to use air quotes. “‘dates’ because, because you—”

“Because every time I did, afterwards, it was kind of like the old us again. Like how we used to be.” David answered, interrupting Patrick again. Then he smiled sadly, wetly, with a furrowing of his prominent brows. “I missed you, Patrick.” He added, his words laden with emotion, and Patrick thought his heart my break in half.

“Fuck, I missed you too David! But do you know how crazy this is? How many fake dates did you go on, just to avoid talking to me about how you felt?” He watched as David’s face turned defensive, but in a bright, happy way, because the smile never fully left the corner of his mouth, and his eyes never lost their sparkle.

“Okay, well, I didn’t see you telling me how you felt, so.” He replied, his tone accusatory and gesturing wildly with his hands. Patrick wanted to grab those hands and bundle to them to his mouth, and kiss every finger, every knuckle, every one of those silver rings he wore every day. But he didn’t. Instead, he just grinned at David.

“That’s fair.” He replied, and David’s tirade seemed to melt, and his face turned soft and fond again.

“And I don’t know how many dates. I didn’t count.” He added, answering Patricks other question, a little bashfully.
“Well I did. It was 8.” Patrick replied, equally soft and bashful. David’s eyes widened a little before a shy smile that he tried to withhold twisted sideways on his face.

“Oh.”

“Yeah.”

“So… you counted?” David asked, looking up into Patrick’s eyes and holding the contact. Patrick chuckled once, guiltily, and then sighed and shrugged.

“Yeah, I counted.” He admitted, simply. David seemed to absorb his answer, and nodded slightly.

“Oh.”

“Yeah.”

There was a long pause, a silence filled by the gurgling of the river and the chirping of crickets.

“So… are we friends again? Properly, this time?” David asked, hopefully, after some time.

“You want to be?” Patrick replied, and felt his heart explode as he watched the gleeful and adorable way David was wildly nodding his head.

“Yeah, mmhmm. Yes. I would like that very much.” Patrick had been holding his smile back as much as he could, but at this, he let it break free. It was so wide it pulled at his cheeks and made his eyes small and squinty, and he was showing so many teeth David could probably see his molars. But he didn’t care. *He and David were going to be friends again. Real friends.* Even if that was all it was, all it ever would be, Patrick was happy. He was more than happy. He was *elated.*

“Yeah, David. So would I.” He agreed, and it felt like the kind of moment they should hug in. Patrick wanted nothing more than to pull David into his arms and hold him tightly. But David wasn’t moving to hug Patrick, so he didn’t want to make the wrong move. David wanted to be *friends.* And most friends weren’t constantly touching one another. So he held back. He could do
it. David’s friendship could be enough, because it had to be. It was that, or nothing. And this was so much better than nothing, Patrick didn’t want to let his desire for more, for romance, ruin this wonderful moment of reconciliation.

The silence stretched on, and the two of them continued to sit there, looking at one another and smiling, but not knowing what to do or say next.

“This is awkward.” David said, after a while, and they both laughed.

“Yeah, I guess we can’t just turn it back on like a lightswitch.” Patrick admitted, and David’s smile turned soft, and so did his eyes.

“Yeah, but… we’ll get there.” He said, and Patrick gripped his own knee hard, to stop himself from reaching out to touch David’s. He really wanted to touch David.

“I think so too.” Patrick replied. They held each other’s gaze, smiling softly, until the moment stretched again to another (almost) awkward point, and then they both turned to look out at the water. And for a long time, they sat quietly, watching the light shimmering on the rippling water, listening to the hypnotic sound of it passing them by. The silence was no longer awkward, but comforting, as they both looked out upon the water and reflected on their situation. It would have been the perfect moment, if only Patrick could have reached out and held David’s hand.

But it was still pretty close to perfect. And Patrick was a patient guy. And suddenly, he was feeling a lot more optimistic for the future than he had been an hour earlier. Although, the future was still yet to come. For now, he was happy with the present. Because in the present, he was friends with David Rose again. And that was a pretty big deal.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked this! And I'm sorry it was so long! It's been a bit of a slow road back together, but things are just going to continue to get better from here I promise ;) although you never know where some drama may pop up!

Please let me know what you thought! I adore all your comments and they keep me so motivated <3

Xoxo
The walk back to their room was quiet, but comfortable. Patrick dug his hands into his pockets to stop himself from reaching out to hold David’s. But that was okay. David just wanted to be friends, and that was okay. Because it would have to be okay. It would be painful, sure. Swallowing or burying his feelings for David would perhaps be the hardest thing he’d ever do, but he would suffer willingly. Because David only wanted to be friends, and Patrick would be there for him, in whatever capacity he wanted him, for however long, just to keep him in his life.

In bed that night, David touched himself again. Patrick hadn’t known if he would, but he’d hoped. Oh hell, had he hoped. He’d fought the pull of sleep, just on the off chance that David might do it. It was a date night, after all. Even if David had never actually gone on the date. Because Patrick now knew he hadn’t gone on them any of those other nights, either. Come to think of it, maybe that was why he had been doing it. Because he hadn’t… it had never made sense to Patrick before, although he hadn’t wanted to question it too much. But knowing now that he’d never slept with any of those people, he understood a little better.

Laying in bed, pretending to sleep, Patrick listened, and watched when he thought it was safe, as David quietly got himself off. Everything was happening under his plush comforter, but his head was thrown back, eyes tightly shut, mouth open just a bit. And fuck was he beautiful. He allowed his mind to wander, to picture himself as the one doing it to David. Patrick felt his already raging erection throb almost painfully.
Every little hitch in David’s breathing, every stifled moan, made Patrick want to reach down and join him. It was so bad, that first night after their talk, that Patrick had almost considered slowly and sneakily moving his arm down into a position where he could at least squeeze himself, if not fully get off. The tension was just too much, he honestly thought he might burst.

His own breathing had become so harsh and rapid that he worried David might hear him, but in the end, he supposed the worry was for nothing. Because David had finished, and eventually fallen asleep. And Patrick was left laying there, awake, for a long time after. Despite how exhausted he was. He just couldn’t seem to stop his mind from going over the day he’d had. The highs, the lows, the unbelievables. This latest event had been the unbelievable part. Patrick still couldn’t believe he was so lucky.

Sure, it was a little sexually frustrating. But it was also a little sexually awakening to Patrick. He had only known he was gay for less than 2 months, and he’d as-yet not even acted on it. He had no idea what it was even like to kiss a guy, let alone… more. And yet, he’d been given this gift, by David, to watch, and listen, and fantasize. That’s what it felt like, at least. A gift. So yes, it worked Patrick up into a lather and he wasn’t able to do anything about it until the next morning in the shower. But it was worth every agonizing second.

He knew what he wanted, now. He wanted David, of course. But he also knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that he wanted men. Hearing David, the sound of his skin softly slapping, he could picture in his head himself doing that to David. He could picture David doing that to him. And he’d never been so fucking turned on in his life. Nothing had ever before felt so right. He’d even tried thinking about touching a girl, just for comparison’s sake, and instantly felt his erection flag.

The act he had performed so dutifully (although as infrequently as he could get away with) for so long now somehow felt so wrong in his mind. He didn’t think he’d ever be able to fake it again. The only reason he’d been able to do it for so long with Rachel was because he loved her, and he hadn’t known the truth about himself. His repression skills had been at 100, and that part of himself had been neatly tucked away, waiting for one David Rose to unlock it.

He’d kind of thought that everyone disliked it, but just gritted their teeth and bore it, for the sake of their girlfriends. But now he wasn’t so sure. Because he thought he’d really enjoy doing that for David. To feel and watch him fall apart beneath his hands? A literal shiver went down his spine at the thought. Eventually, he’d drifted off, and although he couldn’t remember his dreams in the morning, he knew they’d been good.

Everything was so much better the next day, although it still felt weird. Like buying new shoes and wearing them around to try to break them in. It would take some getting used to, not touching David. At times, it was so hard, that Patrick wondered if it would be so bad if he couldn’t just add a few casual touches. A nudge with an elbow, a teasing shove, a soft caress of his cheek… Fuck,
damnit. This is why he couldn’t touch him, not even a little. Because it was a very slippery slope. And if David wanted to just be friends, Patrick was going to have to refrain entirely.

By the end of the day, Patrick was so worked up, he already felt the need for release again. Even after his morning shower session. He’d gone to bed horny and frustrated, but happy. Because things were going so much better with David. He was waiting for Patrick again, and joking with him around their friends, and they’d catch eyes occasionally, and share small smiles. The ice between them had completely thawed, and the relief of that was worth going to bed with a boner every single night if he had to.

But that second night, he’d found it hard to sleep. He was perhaps a little too turned on, thanks to a really unhelpful dance party Twyla and David had had when they were hanging out after dinner. They’d been listening to music, and David and Twy had been bopping their heads to an old Mariah song. Then they’d caught eyes, and David started rhythmically moving his shoulders while maintaining their eye contact. Twyla had smiled, and joined in. They sat, on opposite beds, dancing at each other with increasing enthusiasm, for a little while before they’d both burst onto their feet, and gone full-forced with their dance-off.

Patrick and Stevie had laughed as they watched them, opting not to join in, but Patrick couldn’t keep his eyes off David’s hips. The way they moved, gyrating to the music, thrusting in a very sexualized way on the spot, running his hands from his chest to his thighs and back as he and Twyla turned to dance back-to-back, dipping down to the floor, and then coming slowly back up together.

When the song was finished, everyone was laughing, and David and Twyla were out of breath. They’d gone hard. Almost as hard as Patrick’s dick. He’d had to sit there for quite some time, glad he was wearing a particularly big hoodie that chilly autumn evening, until it was safe to get up again.

So yeah, he’d been pretty worked up when he’d gone to bed. And it had been a little hard to find sleep that night. By 2am, he was getting a little desperate, still lying there, awake. He’d tossed and turned a bit, even turning his back on David for a little while, just in case he found it easier to sleep on his left side. He hadn’t, and he’d quickly turned back to face him.

His mind started to wander to the previous night. To watching David get himself off, thinking Patrick was asleep, secretly in the middle of the night. And how quickly he’d fallen asleep afterwards… And then he had an idea. He wasn’t sure it was a good idea, but he’d already committed to it the second it had crossed his mind.

Craning his neck to look over at David and make sure he was asleep, Patrick slowly stretched his arm out to reach and grab a tissue out of the box on his bedside shelf. The sound it made was
loud in the quiet room, and he looked to David to make sure he hadn’t awoken. He hadn’t, so Patrick let himself relax a little. He laid back, pulled his blanket up nice and high, and reached underneath to shimmy his boxers down just a little, freeing his cock.

Then, he carefully, more slowly than he would have liked, began to work his sensitized shaft. All of his thoughts were of David, as he began to bring himself towards release. This was good, this was so good. He needed this. His mind flashed between memories of the touches they’d shared, back before everything had been ruined, and fantasies of the future. David sucking his cock, David grinding him to completion on the dancefloor of some loud dark club, David throwing him into a bathroom stall and fucking him there, because they couldn’t wait to get back home.

He was almost there, he felt the pull from deep in his belly, and he couldn’t help himself, he increased the speed of his strokes. His breathing was ragged, but he tried to stifle any noises that wanted to rise out of his chest. Unable to help himself, his head turned to look at David as he came hard into the kleenex in his fist. And for a second, he could swear he saw David’s eyes open, looking back at him. But he was still deep into the throws of his orgasm, and he blinked and David’s eyes were closed again. When he finally came down from his orgasm, and he was able to think again, Patrick studied David’s face carefully.

His breathing was even, his face peacefully slack… he seemed to be well and thoroughly asleep. Maybe it was just in his head, Patrick thought, and it wasn’t much of a stretch of logic. He was almost delirious with exhaustion, and he’d been thinking of David as he came anyways. He easily could have imagined it. And frankly the thought of David watching him, as he’d watched David, was a pretty big fucking turn on anyways.

So Patrick’s mind had been peaceful, as he’d drifted off to sleep, not long after. The next day, David gave no indication that he’d witnessed anything, and things remained good with them. Their energy was warm again, their gaze fond, their words teasing but kind. The only thing they were missing was touch. Although, that was a pretty big thing to be missing, to Patrick. He missed it like he might miss the sun, if it suddenly decided not to rise one day. But he was determined not step outside David’s boundaries.

That night, to Patrick’s surprise, David jerked himself off again, though much earlier than usual. It was barely midnight, and Patrick hadn’t been expecting it. It wasn’t a “date” night, after all, and until this point, those were the only nights he’d tried this. He was so glad he’d been facing him, when he’d heard the telltale sound of the kleenex sliding free of the box. Patrick had watched more openly than usual, not being as careful to hide it, but he didn’t think David saw him. David always laid on his back, his head thrown back against the pillow, eyes squeezed shut. Sometimes his head would flop to one side or the other, but he didn't think he ever opened his eyes.
The next morning, they once again acted as though nothing had happened, but David was maybe even more attentive than normal, which Patrick enjoyed very much. He had asked to pick out Patrick’s outfit for him, which he’d happily allowed. David had also asked him to wait while he finished his hair and skincare, which Patrick gladly agreed to. At breakfast, they sat across from each other, and he kept catching David looking at him. More than usual. They’d smile, and a few times, they just kept staring.

“Hey, loverboys, over here.” Stevie cut in, at one point, causing both of their heads to snap towards her.

“Come on, Stevie, you know we’re just friends.” Patrick said, and tried to ignore the way David had looked back towards him afterwards. He felt his gaze for a few seconds, scrutinizing him, and Patrick wondered if David was testing his commitment to their friendship. Making sure that he believed him. Patrick was so worried that if David didn’t believe that he only wanted friendship, that he’d end it. That if David caught any whiff of the true feelings Patrick held for him, that they’d be over before they even really got back on their feet.

So he maintained his poker face, which he was pretty good at, and ignored David while staring down Stevie, willing her to apologize with his glare.

“Fine, sorry. You’re right, I’m guessing you’d have to at least have to touch each other to be lovers. So you have a good point.” She said, needling him a little, and okay that hurt. He glared at Stevie, and she stared back neutrally.

Luckily, Ted had shown up just then, interrupting them with a story about a baby raccoon he’d just seen, and had provided a very welcome distraction. He’d also provided some very welcome amusement, what with David’s horrified reaction to Ted’s story.

“David. It’s a baby raccoon. It’s cute, not a monster.” Patrick had teased, and David had huffed and crossed his arms across his chest, defiantly sticking out his chin.

“Yeah, well, we’ll see how cute you are when it attacks you and you get rabies. Don’t come crying to me when you start foaming at the mouth and have to be put down like Old Yeller.” David replied, and Patrick had laughed.

“Is that how you think it works?” He asked, amused, and David rolled his eyes.
They’d all argued about the relative dangers of the local wildlife as they ate their breakfasts, laughing and raising their voices, until finally Ted had declared he had to leave to attend a study group for his biology class. His first exam was coming this Monday though Patrick and David’s wasn’t until the Tuesday. That was still only just a few days away. After that, it would be Thanksgiving weekend, and most of them were heading back to their respective homes for the holiday.

Ted had broken the spell, and everyone had agreed they also had to go. This was the first ever exam season in university for all of them, and they were all taking it pretty seriously, with the exception of maybe Stevie. Although Patrick thought she might have cared more than she let on, and had a secret suspicion that the place she disappeared to for hours at a time was not, in fact, local bars and establishments of ill-repute, but actually the library. He just valued his life enough not to go there, find her, and call her out on it. Plus, Patrick would never do anything do discourage academic achievement, and if he was right, he was proud of her.

“You wanna study with me?” Patrick asked David, as they deposited their trays onto the rack, and headed back towards their room.

“Of course, study buddy.” David replied with a smile, and Patrick felt a wave of butterflies in his stomach, and didn’t particularly know why. “In our room, or the library?”

Patrick shrugged. “Wherever you’d prefer.”

“Oh good, because I’m exhausted and if I fall asleep, I’d rather be in our room than the library.” He answered, and Patrick felt his brows crinkle together.

“You’re exhausted?” He asked, concerned. Now it was David that shrugged, perhaps a little too nonchalantly.

“I haven’t been sleeping much, recently.” He answered, his eyes darting to the side for the briefest of seconds, and Patrick felt himself flush.

“Oh yeah?” He asked, trying to keep his voice level and cool. All his mind could think of was whether or not he’d been sleeping well the night before last, at around 2am. He watched David’s face for a tell, but wasn’t sure he saw one.

“Yeah, and I really don’t want to fall asleep in the library again. Last time I did that, my neck
hurt for days.” He paused, then turned to look at Patrick. “You’d put me to bed, if I fell asleep at my desk, right?” He asked, and it was casual, but Patrick felt his entire body short circuit.

“Umm, uh, yeah.” He stammered, because he had to say something, although it didn’t come out sounding nearly as cool as he’d hoped. Patrick and David had not touched each other in well over a month, not even a little bit, not even a brushed pinkie, or a bracing hand as they passed one another in a crowded hallway. Nothing. So to ask him to put him to bed, if he fell asleep… He suppressed a full body shudder. The thought of touching David again, of feeling his skin on his, was just too much to handle. “Of course.” He managed to add, thankfully, and David smiled sadly, and began to lead the way back to their room.

Patrick didn’t say much as they walked, because he couldn’t stop thinking of ways to encourage David to fall asleep while studying. Dim lighting, he thought, although it was a bright sunny day and their room got a lot of light. Maybe he could play some soft ambient music, and ask David to spray some of his lavender room diffuser… that always seemed to calm him down.

When they got back to the room, Patrick didn’t have the heart (or the nerve) to actually try to lull David to sleep. It just seemed a little… well, if he fell asleep on his own, that was one thing. But Patrick was trying to get back into David’s life, and it didn’t seem like the best way to start that was to trick him into anything. Instead, he pulled out his books and set up on his side of their long built-in desk, while David got ready on the other side. Patrick noticed that David seemed tense, but didn’t say anything as he settled in to (once again) go over his economics notes.

Patrick wasn’t very worried about exams, but David sure seemed to be. After about an hour, Patrick couldn’t take it anymore, he was too worried about David. His breathing had steadily been getting harsher and less even, he seemed to be holding it for long periods and letting it go in a huff. He looked over to find David, fingers dug into his hair, pulling at the roots. He was pouring over a history textbook, and by the look on his face, Patrick thought he might be in physical pain.

“Hey, how’s it going?” Patrick asked, unable to keep quiet any longer. David turned to look at him, and his eyes looked glassy.

“Good…” David replied, completely unconvincingly. Patrick felt a pang in his chest at David’s tone and he yearned to reach out to him. If he could, he would have put his hand on his arm, or maybe even pulled him into a warm embrace. But he couldn’t touch him, so instead he turned his chair towards him and gave him his full attention.
“David.” He said, looking him in the eye. “Are you okay? You were fine at breakfast, but…” He started, and he saw David cross his arms, and roll his head back, his jaw clenched tight, as he obviously decided whether or not he would be able to share what was bothering him. Thankfully, he’d decided to share. And once the words started flowing, they didn’t stop for a while.

“Okay. Fine. I’ve never been so worried about anything before in my life as I am about these exams, Patrick. These exams are going to set the tone for our entire academic year, and if I bomb them, then what does that say about me? That I’m a failure, bound to fail. I’m going to lose my academic bursary, and my Dad is going to have to pay even more money, and I really don’t think we have it, so he’s probably going to make my transfer to York or Ryerson or something, because fuck, if I lose my bursary we both know UofT won’t want me, and they’ll make me live at home, and all because I couldn’t. Fucking. Remember. What. Year. The motherfucking. Witch trials. Ended.”

David had ground out the last words with clenched teeth and fists. He even started to bang on the desk to emphasize each one, and when he was done, he hunched forward and pressed each closed fist into his eyes, hard, and began to rock. Patrick’s whole body twitched, and he reached out towards David before snatching his hand back. He sat there for a moment, completely unsure about what to do. Every instinct in his body told him to reach out David, to comfort him. But… was that what David wanted?

But the decision was made for Patrick a moment later, when David’s breathing began coming in gasps, and it sounded like he was hyperventilating. Patrick saw his back rise and fall in raking dry sobs, and all thoughts but one left his mind. This may not be what David wanted, but it was what he needed. Without hesitation, Patrick slid forward, off his chair, and dropped to his knees before David, pulling him into a warm (and hopefully reassuring) embrace.

For a second, he felt David tense, but then he turned into Patrick’s arms, and allowed himself to be held. His arms wrapped around Patrick’s back, his hands clutching him desperately, like a lifeline, his fingers digging in. David pressed his face into Patrick’s neck, and he could feel that David’s eyes were wet.

He was still hyperventilating, so Patrick slowly began moving his open hands up and down David’s back in a soothing way, and pressed his lips to his ear and whispered, “shhh, shhh, it’s gonna be okay, it’s gonna be okay, I’m here”, or some variation of those words, over and over again. Softly. Reassuringly. For as long as David needed.

After a minute (or was it 5? or 10?), David slid forward and down to the floor, to be closer to Patrick, perhaps. Patrick adjusted his arms and pulled him in further, and felt another raking sob escape from David, into the crook of his neck, which was now thoroughly wet with tears. He continued the slow, steady movement of his hands on David’s back, and whispered again into David’s ear. “Breathe with me. In. Out. In. Out.” And then he stopped speaking, and demonstrated
by taking deep, cleansing breaths himself, trying to lead David into a better rhythm.

But David’s diaphragm didn’t want to cooperate, and he didn’t seem to be getting better. In fact, he may have been getting worse. Patrick was getting really worried. Yes, there was a large part of himself that was thrilling to have David in his arms again. But there was a much, much bigger part that was worried sick about him. David was definitely a high-strung kind of guy, and it was clear that he was prone to anxiety. But he’d never said anything about having anxiety attacks of this severity, or what to do to help him if he ever did.

And Patrick was pretty sure at this point that this was an anxiety attack. David was full on gasping for air, now, and Patrick felt frantic. “Hey, hey, what can I do. How can I help you?” He asked, but David didn’t reply. Patrick placed one hand on the back of David’s head, cradling him into his neck, as he craned his head to look for-- there. He reached with his other arm, and grabbed his water bottle, flipped the cap, and held it gently out to him. With his other hand, he turned David’s head a little, so he could see.

“Take a sip of water.” He instructed softly, and heard the rawness of his own voice, thick with emotion and worry. He didn’t think he would, but was surprised when David did as instructed, without hesitation. He took one sputtering sip, coughed a little, and took another. “Good.” Patrick said, when he was done, taking the bottle away with one hand, and patting David’s head with the other. David returned his face to it’s place in Patrick’s neck, and he felt his hands clutch at his shirt. And then Patrick felt an ache in his knee, and realized that they were on the hard floor, and had been for some time

“Hey, let’s move over here.” Patrick suggested, and gently urged David towards his bed. He knew David was exhausted, and that was probably a big part of his anxiety attack, and hoped that maybe he could rest for a while. He felt David nod against him, and compliantly moved along as Patrick led him by the hand.

Patrick had David lie down first, and watched as his entire body tensed, curling in on itself into the fetal position, and he balled his fists into his eyes. His breathing was maybe a little better than before, but not much. “Shh, shh,” Patrick soothed, as he laid down next to him, curling his body around David’s protectively and wrapping him in his arms. His hand found David’s hair, threaded it between his fingers, and he started to softly tug, before smoothing the hair down and petting him with as much love and patience and healing energy he could muster.

He alternated tugs and pets, hoping that maybe the sensory stimulation might lull David into a restful state. When he felt David’s body relax slightly, he felt something in his chest loosen a little, and he continued, occasionally whispering affirmations and encouragement to him. He led him with breathing exercises, and just held him, being there as best as he could, and gradually, he felt David relax. His breathing began to even out, and his muscles no longer felt as hard as concrete. Patrick continued to work his hands up and down David’s sides, into his hair, always moving,
always reassuring.

Patrick wasn’t sure how long they laid like that, but after a while, David’s breathing began to slow, and his body relaxed the rest of the way. He was just becoming pretty sure that he had fallen asleep, when David spoke softly into the quiet room. “Thank-you, Patrick.” Patrick smiled and shifted, pulling David a little closer.

“You don’t have to thank me.”

“And yet I am.” He replied, and Patrick huffed a tiny laugh. They were quiet for a moment after that, and a thought kept swirling around Patrick’s head, so much so that he couldn’t help himself from blurting it out.

“I was really worried about you, David.” And he was, he had been. He still was.

“That was… a sort of bad one. I haven’t had many before. Just a couple… once in highschool, once after Europe. I think it’s because I’m so tired. I… that was really embarrassing--”

“No.” Patrick cut in. “No, don’t do that.”

David paused, and Patrick felt his body tense, his back still pressed against Patrick’s chest, Patrick’s arms wrapped possessively around him, holding him close. Then he felt David relax again, and he smiled. “I’m lucky you were here.” He said, and he said the words delicately, like they scared him. Patrick knew vulnerability scared David, and he was honestly touched just to have not been banished from the room the second he’d begun breaking down. That David had allowed him to help was a big deal. To Patrick, it was an honour.

“I’m glad I was here.” Patrick replied, speaking into the soft hairs at the back of David’s neck. His lips weren’t quite touching, because he couldn’t do that. David just wanted Patrick’s friendship. Right now, Patrick was only allowed to be touching him like this because he was providing comfort in a time of need, and he couldn’t take advantage of David’s position. That wasn’t very gentlemanly, for one thing. For the other, it wasn’t what David wanted. So his lips fell just short of brushing the skin that he ached to kiss, to taste. Patrick literally ached to be closer to David, despite the fact that he had him firmly in his grasp at that moment. It wasn't close enough.

It was because Patrick wanted, no, needed more. But, he thought, he better get used to it. Because David didn’t.
Although apparently, David’s idea of friendship did include bodily comfort in times of distress, so Patrick was going to take that as a win. If David didn’t (at the very least) care for him as a close friend, he wouldn’t have let Patrick anywhere near him in that state.

It was a small comfort, but a comfort nonetheless.

After another minute or two, Patrick was pretty sure that David was falling asleep. And now that the panic attack was over and David was back to a relative state of normal, and they were still lying there together as they were, Patrick’s thoughts were getting a lot more... impure. It was one thing when David had been in distress. Patrick’s mind hadn’t even gone there. But David seemed okay now, and they were still touching. No, not touching. Spooning. The only way they could be closer was if they weren’t wearing clothes, or if Patrick’s cock was in his...

OKAY. It was time to get up. Patrick’s brain had officially left the territory of “platonic thoughts”. Besides, David seemed to be comfortable now, and he needed sleep. Patrick slowly and carefully moved to lift his arm up and off of David, and tried to roll away, off the bed. But David apparently wasn’t asleep, and stopped him.

He grabbed Patrick’s arm, and pulled it back around him, like a blanket, effectively yanking Patrick’s body back up against him. Then David craned his neck around so he could just barely see Patrick. His eyes were red and tired, but no longer looked lost and terrified, which was a vast improvement.

They maintained the eye contact for a moment, Patrick staring deep into David’s dark brown eyes, trying to decipher a meaning there. What did David want?

“Can you stay?” He asked, quietly. Just barely a whisper. And perhaps he sounded too vulnerable to himself, because he added with a little more strength. “If... you don’t mind. You’re comfy and warm, and I feel like I’m on the verge of the first decent sleep I’ve had in a while. So if you being here has anything to do with it, I--”

“Of course I’ll stay.” Patrick interrupted, smiling and ducking his head so David couldn’t see him anymore, unless he fully turned to face him. But Patrick didn’t want that right now. He thought he might smolder into ash, if David could see his face at that moment. His skin was already burning, and he had molten lava running through his veins.

Patrick wasn’t really sure if he was lucky, or if this was some elaborate torture, being able to lie
with David like that, but not being able to do anything about it. This was all he’d dreamed of, for over a month. Touching David again. It had consumed his thoughts, both waking and dreaming. Especially since they’d had their talk the other day, and things had gotten so much better. This was that missing puzzle piece, the one he’d so longed for.

But now that Patrick understood his feelings for David, now that he knew how much he loved him and, fuck, how much he wanted him… he wasn’t sure whether laying down on David’s small twin bed, his back pressed against Patrick’s front, hugging Patrick’s arm to his chest… was this heaven, or was it hell? Because David didn’t want Patrick’s love. Well, not the kind of love that Patrick wanted to give him, anyways. Perhaps friendship was okay. But friendship felt pale and weak, compared to the breadth of Patrick’s feelings.

So maybe this was hell, Patrick thought, as David nuzzled back into him, and he wrapped his arms around him a little tighter. If David wanted to reintroduce touching into their relationship, but not want more from Patrick, there was bound to be suffering involved.

But what a sweet suffering it would be.

Patrick wasn’t sure he would, but soon after David drifted off, Patrick had followed him. Happier than he had been in a very long time, and much, much more terrified.

David awoke gently as a sunbeam fell across his face. His bed didn’t get the light until the late afternoon, so he knew he had been out for quite some time. He hadn’t felt so rested in weeks. No, longer. Probably since the night before Rachel had showed up. The last time he and Patrick had slept together like this.

God, he was glad that Patrick had stayed. David had needed this. He had really needed it, actually, considering the fucking terrifying anxiety attack David had experienced earlier. He had no idea what the fuck that was about. He wanted to blame exhaustion, but that was honestly probably just a part of it.

David had been letting his worries and anxieties bottle up for a long time. His worries about
Patrick, his worries about school… top all of that off with the somewhat distressing phone call he’d had with his father the other day about Thanksgiving weekend where he’d been instructed that money was short and they’d had to let their private driver go, and he’d now have to take the Greyhound bus back to Toronto, like some common vagrant. Just the idea of it gave him hives. David was honestly surprised he hadn’t broken down sooner.

And once again, he was glad that Patrick had been there to help him when it had happened. He didn’t think he’d have let anyone else even near him, in that state, but for whatever reason he didn’t want to push Patrick away. When David got into his anxieties, he usually wanted to push anyone and everyone away. Whether it was his mom, his Dad, his sister… he hated for people to see him like that. But not this time. This time, his instinct was to pull, not to push. In his panicked state, somehow David had wanted to pull Patrick closer, impossibly closer, like they couldn’t get close enough if he tried.

And Patrick had allowed it. He’d been there for him, he’d been his shelter from the storm. He had literally wrapped David up in his arms and protected him from himself. Coaxed his breathing back to normal. Whispered encouragement and affirmations in his ear. Rubbed his back and his arms and his chest and his hair. Patrick had done all that, despite not having romantic feelings for David.

Patrick, David realized, was a really good friend. But Goddamnit, why did that have to be all they were? Why couldn’t they be more? David wanted more of Patrick. He was greedy for him. And possibly a little masochistic, too, because he knew how much it was going to hurt, being Patrick’s friend. To want him, but not be able to have him. Eventually, he’d have to watch Patrick find some girl (or possibly guy, he supposed, but he still wasn’t fully sure about that), and Patrick would date someone else. Someone that wasn’t David.

The thought left him hollow inside. And yet David still wanted Patrick in every way he could get him, in every way Patrick would allow. He wanted to be close to him, as close as two friends could get. He was determined to be a good friend, too. Even if it killed him, he would support Patrick.

And no matter how much David wanted to push the boundaries, to make a move on Patrick, or at least ask him about his feelings… he wouldn’t. He would never dare. Because after having lost his friendship once before, David was not willing to lose Patrick again.

David didn’t want to move, but an itch on his nose forced him to after a few minutes of lying blissfully in Patrick’s arms. He tried hard not to disturb him, but his movement woke him up anyways and alas the spell was broken, the moment was over, and David felt Patrick’s arm retreat.
“Hey.” Patrick said, his voice still rough with sleep.

David rolled over to face him. They were practically nose to nose, their bodies inches apart, and David instantly regretted his decision. Could he roll back? Would that be weird? Yes, it would, he decided. He would just have to ride it out. Continue to breathe the same air as Patrick, and somehow not lean forward the skant inches to kiss him.

“Hey.” He replied, eventually, and his voice came out breathy, nervous. “You stayed.” He added, because it had been on his mind. He hadn’t expected Patrick to stay. He’d expected him to quietly get out of bed the second David had fallen asleep.

For one, Patrick wasn’t his boyfriend. It wasn’t his job to be doing this sort of thing for David. He’d already gone above and beyond, the way he’d calmed David down, the way he’d been there for him in his time of need. Patrick hadn’t had to do any of that, but he had, because Patrick was an amazing person. Probably the single best person David had ever met. And being such an amazing, productive member of society, Patrick didn’t usually take naps. He wasn’t a napper. So sure, maybe an amazing person might help out a friend in crisis, as David had been. They might lay with them until they fell asleep. But they wouldn’t sleep with them… would they? Wasn’t that a little above and beyond the call of duty for a roommate or even close friend?

David was confused, he’d never had a friend like Patrick before. He was confused why he’d stayed, but very happy he had, and didn’t want to question it too much. He loved waking up in Patrick’s arms. It felt instantly addictive, like the worst type of drug. The kind that, when you took it, you knew right away that your life would never be the same again. As Jerry Seinfeld had said… once you go first class, you can’t go back. You could never go back. Except David was going to have to go back. How was he going to go back? He didn’t want to fucking go back. Ugh, this wasn’t fair.

“I must have been tired, too.” Patrick replied, the sleep clearing from his eyes and his voice. And, okay, that made sense to David. It made more sense than the alternative. This was an answer that David’s brain was able to reconcile. It made sense to David. It made sense that Patrick was tired, so he had fallen asleep. What wouldn’t have made sense was Patrick staying because he wanted to. He was almost glad to have gotten the answer he had. “You okay now?” Patrick added, reaching up to rub up and down David’s upper arm, and looking searchingly into his eyes.

“Yes… thanks. Again. For--you know.” David managed, trying to work through the embarrassment and shame of being seen like that. But somehow, with one little look and a silent ‘pssht’ like it was no big deal, Patrick made him feel better. And David smiled. “I’ve never seen you sleep during the daytime before.” He added, and Patrick shrugged.

“I must have needed it, I wouldn’t have been able to fall asleep otherwise. But a movie marathon
might be in order for tonight, because I don’t think I’ll be able to fall asleep at anything resembling a decent hour.” David couldn’t help the grin that formed at Patrick’s words. Movie marathon? That did not sound terrible. And it was still a few days before their first exam, he could spare the time. And despite David’s anxiety attack earlier, he honestly really was very prepared. Especially thanks to his fake-dating life these past few weeks. He’d really found the library conducive to studying, and had gotten a lot done during those lonely evenings.

“I think that can be arranged.” He agreed, and opened his mouth to ask a question, but Patrick was already cutting in.

“And to answer your question, you get to pick exactly one movie. So choose wisely.” He said authoritatively, and okay, David closed his mouth, and his argument died in his throat. He did not hate when Patrick laid down the law like that. When he saw that he’d won, Patrick’s smile turned a little triumphant, and if David wasn’t mistaken, also a little fond. “A Sandra Bullock vehicle, I suppose?” He asked, and David’s brows furrowed.

“I like other leading ladies, too, you know.” He replied haughtily. But at Patrick’s pointed glare, David rolled his eyes. “Okay, yes. It will likely be a Sandra Bullock vehicle.” He agreed, and Patrick’s triumphant smile turned even more smug, if that was even possible.

“Okay, but not Practical Magic. We just saw that one.” He said, and oh no, David wasn’t having any of that.

“Excuse me, sir, but it is October, the witching month! It is seasonally-appropriate. Besides, I believe you just clearly stated that I may choose ‘exactly one movie’. You don’t get veto power on mine, unless I get veto power on yours. Do you agree to that?” David asked Patrick, challenging him, his tone bratty and confrontational. Patrick glared at him, like he knew he’d lost the argument and was thinking of some kind of rebuttal but coming up blank.

“You do understand that I am going to pick the most Michael Bay-iest Michael Bay movie to ever Michael Bay, now. Don’t you? Just out of spite. You understand what you’ve started?” Patrick asked, after a moment. He was still glaring, and he said the words with such threatening menace, committing to his bit, that David almost laughed. But he didn’t. Because he was playing along, like a good sport.

“Okay, well now we are definitely watching Practical Magic.” David replied, and Patrick cracked and laughed.

“How do you know I wasn’t using reverse psychology when I told you not to pick that?” He
challenged back. "What if it's really my favourite? Huh?" David froze, eyes narrowing, and quickly judged Patrick on his ability to trick him like that. He definitely could have, if he wanted to. David quickly scoured his memory for any other Sandra Bullock movie that might be painful to Patrick, something he wouldn't like, but his mind came up blank. It was impossible. Every single one of her movies were perfect.

“Well, I guess we'll just see.” David replied, not having much else to say. And then a silence fell in the room, and it suddenly became painfully apparent they were lying face to face on a tiny twin bed. David had almost forgotten all about it as they spoke, that was how easy it was, between them. He always put David instantly at ease. But without their teasing conversation to distract him, David had nothing else to think about except their immediate proximity.

Patrick must have had the same thoughts, because he cleared his throat just then, and said “You wanna get up?” He craned his neck to see the time on David’s LED alarm clock display. “We missed lunch, but it’s only an hour until they start serving dinner. We could see what Styla are up to?”

David smiled, happy his nickname for Stevie and Twyla had stuck, despite he and Patrick not having been very close, these past weeks, when he’d coined it. He nodded. “Sure.”

And with that, Patrick was rolling away from him, and swinging his feet off the bed and down to the floor. He sat there for a moment, getting his bearings, before getting to his feet with a groan. “I get that I needed that, but it feels weird waking up at dinner time.” Patrick said before lifting and smelling his pits. He made a sour face, despite the fact that David knew for a fact that he smelled manly and sexy right now, not smelly and gross.

But David wasn’t going to say anything, especially if it discouraged Patrick from changing his shirt. Which he did, a second later. David would never tire of ogling that pale, almost luminescent, body. It was solid, and muscular, but not too hard. He was still just soft enough to make you want to hug him, and pull him close. Hard bodies were nice to look at, but Patrick had a body made for cuddling, and David would prefer that any day of the week.

Patrick walked shirtless over to his dresser and pulled out the middle drawer. But, no, that was incorrect. “Wear your grey hoodie, the new Trent one.” David said from the comfort of his bed, where he lay watching. Patrick shot him a look. A sort of shy, pleased look with a tight smile that made his dimples pop.

“Got any opinions on my pants, too, David?” Patrick asked, his voice a little pointed, but teasing, and David shook his head.
“No, those are good. They make your ass look great.” David answered honestly, and enjoyed the blush this brought up in Patrick’s cheeks. He turned away from him then, and David wasn’t sure if it was to hide his blush, or show off how great his ass looked in those jeans. He hoped it was the latter.

“Well maybe I shouldn’t wear the grey hoodie then, it’s so big, how will anyone see how great my ass looks?” He asked, feigning innocence, and teasing.

“Sometimes it’s what you don’t show that is the sexiest.” David replied, although it made no sense. He just wanted Patrick to wear the hoodie. “Besides, that hoodie is super comfy and soft.” He added, and Patrick smirked.

“Are you picking the sweater for looks, or for how soft it is? You planning on cuddling up later, David?” He asked, all cocky and sure of himself. David hated him. Except he didn’t, he loved him. He loved him so much.

He quirked one full brow at Patrick and smirked suggestively. “Maybe if you play your cards right, Brewer.” A wide, startled grin spread immediately on Patrick’s face in reply. David held Patrick’s slightly surprised gaze for a moment before getting up to go check himself in the mirror. His hair would need a touch up, and his eyes were bound to be puffy…

After dinner, Patrick, Stevie, Twyla, and David walked down along the river together, to take in the changing leaves. It was a beautiful clear, autumn evening, the kind that just begged you to go outside and take a walk. It was a cool night, but not overly so, and the sun was just beginning to set. The entire sky was cast in reds and golds and oranges almost as spectacular as the leaves on the maples, birches, beeches, and oaks of the drumlin and the wooded areas on either side of the river.

The only way to describe it was picturesque. It was like living inside a Tom Thompson painting. The river was calm that evening, so calm that the surface almost turned to glass, reflecting the brilliant sky above. David felt an almost ethereal sense of happiness as they walked, the four of them, joking and happy, together. He realized he hadn’t been this happy since before Rachel had arrived, and almost no time that he could think of, prior to arriving here at Trent. He had experienced shades of happiness before in life, of course, but never before had he experienced this pure, concentrated version of joy.
He hadn’t thought he’d ever be able to reclaim this feeling of happiness, and he suddenly felt fiercely determined not to screw it up again. David had gotten to the point where he pretty much blamed himself for the split between him and Patrick. It had all come down to him sleeping with Sebastien. If he hadn’t, David felt sure that things would never have gotten so cold and distant.

But now they weren’t anymore. By some miracle, things that he didn’t think could be undone, had been reversed. And he and Patrick seemed… well, they were fucking amazing. At that very moment, David was enjoying just how much better things had become, as he walked with Patrick’s arm thrown around him, heavy and warm, and possessive. David had shivered, and Patrick had instantly noticed and moved to briskly rub his arms and back, and then proceeded to wrap his arm around him for good measure. He’d felt instantly warmer, although David didn’t know whether that was due to the body heat, or to the full body flush that the proximity with Patrick caused inside him.

“So, are you two, like, back to normal now?” Stevie asked, changing the subject from a dying conversation on who the best YTV PJ was. It was a stupid discussion anyways, because the only correct answer was Paul.

David turned his head to look at Patrick, who smiled back at him and winked, before looking towards Stevie. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He said, deadpan, a blank confused, vacant look on his face. David couldn’t help but laugh.

“You fucker, you know exactly what I mean.” She replied, but Patrick just kept looking back at her with a guileless expression. “I mean, are things better--I mean, is this--” (she gestured at the two guys walking with their arms around one another broadly with one hand) “something we can expect, moving forward?”

“Were you expecting something else?” David asked, joining in, and Stevie rolled her eyes dramatically.

“You two deserve each other.” She replied, like she was fed up, but David could see through her. She was as happy as he was. Well, maybe not as happy. But she was stoked. She’d been heading up the “kiss and make up” bandwagon since day one. And, while they hadn’t and weren’t going to be kissing any time soon, they had made up. And that was a pretty big improvement, considering the unnatural state things had been existing in for the last while.

“Yeah, poor Ted and Miguel are going to lose their title as cutest roommates.” Twyla chimed in, and David snorted.
“You know he actually wrote that on his whiteboard? It says #CutestRoomies. He claims he doesn’t know who wrote it but it was totally him.” David supplied, and beside him, Patrick laughed.

“Oh, he absolutely wrote it himself.” He agreed.

They continued their perfect walk until they hit the end of the property, and then turned back and headed home in the darkening twilight. The sky was a dusky purple still, but already stars were popping up. They all walked with their heads tilted up, watching the sky turn dark and the stars appear. Every time David blinked, there were more.

It was fully dark by the time they got back to the Lady Eaton dorm, and the sky was speckled and shining. This far north of the city, where there was very little light, you could see more stars than anywhere David had ever been before. It was absolutely breathtaking. Almost as breathtaking as the feeling of having Patrick’s strong arms around his body again. But maybe not quite.

When they returned to their dorms, Twyla and Stevie had declared that they needed to keep studying, and David knew that to be very true. Twyla needed all the study time she could get, just due to the flighty nature of her attention span. Stevie needed all the study time she could get, because up to that point, she had almost not started studying at all. She claimed that cramming was the way to go, something about short term memory versus long term memory and adamantly stood behind that philosophy.

David had thought Patrick was going to have a stroke, or pop an embolism in his brain or something, when he couldn’t convince Stevie to set up a study schedule and prepare in advance. David naturally fell somewhere between the two of them, when it came to his philosophy on academic diligence.

So Styla had splintered off, and it was only David and Patrick left for the movie marathon that would include one, and only one movie that David would choose. Although, he was starting to think that ratio was a little unfair, now that Stevie and Twyla weren’t with them to make their selections. Unless they only planned to watch two movies, David was getting a pretty raw deal. He made a note to bring up that point at an opportune time. Specifically, when it was time to pick the third movie.

“Let’s get ready for bed first.” Patrick suggested, and David agreed. They’d walked together down to the bathroom to brush their teeth, and even shared one sink stall between them. When they got back, David changed into his drop-crotched soft black pants, and a soft grey v-necked t-shirt.
Patrick put on some basic plaid flannel pants that he’d probably picked up at Mark’s Work Warehouse or somewhere similarly salt-of-the-earth, but he left the grey hoodie on. And God David was glad that he had. When Patrick wore that hoodie, all David wanted to do was touch him. And he didn’t want to make any presumptions, but things had been going pretty well today, and he was hoping that, platonic or not, maybe there would be a little bit of cuddling during this movie marathon.

As it turned out, there had been a lot of cuddling. Because it was just the two of them, they’d sat side by side at the head of Patrick’s bed, instead of sideways with their back to the wall. He had set his laptop on the ledge of his bedside shelf, and at first, they just watched the movie. Patrick had picked Transformers 3, which was perhaps the worst thing David’s eyeballs had ever seen. But he didn’t care. Because slowly over the course of the movie, the inches between them began to shrink.

First it was Patrick’s shoulder. He kept nudging David, to draw his attention to particularly horrendous scenes in a teasing, mocking way that somehow never left the realm of good-natured fun. It was a talent of Patrick’s, his ability to mock you constantly but never make you hate him. In fact, it was bizarrely endearing, and David didn’t think anyone else in the world could pull it off quite like Patrick did. Stevie was good at mockery, too, but she didn’t make you love her afterwards quite like Patrick did. It was truly a skill.

Eventually, after nudging David again, Patrick just stayed. He didn’t pull away. He remained slumped to the side a little, his shoulder pressing into David’s. David thought the butterflies in his stomach and chest might literally take flight and carry him away, the sensation was so strong. He stopped watching the movie very quickly, after that. Not that he was watching it much to begin with. Indecipherable CGI robots with oddly racist overtones was not exactly his thing, when it came to movies.

And yet David loved this movie. In the third act (if you could call it that), Patrick had adjusted himself so that his body leaned in towards David, and suddenly instead of just his shoulder, now his knee, and leg sort of leaned on David’s. Their hands were millimeters away from each other, and David’s fingers ached from the strain of not reaching out to touch him. But he held back, because he was still unsure.

Unsure of what Patrick wanted, of what their boundaries were now. He knew that he liked Patrick, that he had a crush on him… okay he knew he was stupidly in love with him and would probably do anything for him, no matter how preposterous or impossible. He knew all that, that wasn’t what he was unsure about.

What he was unsure about was what Patrick wanted. He had said he wanted to be friends, and that was the guideline David had been working with, especially since they’d cleared the air that night
outside the Bata Library. But then they hadn’t touched each other for days, and David had been so sure that Patrick didn’t want that kind of friendship anymore. And yet here they were now, back to the same comfortable, affectionate, easy way of being together that they’d found when they first came to Trent and met each other.

But back then, things had definitely gotten flirty. David refused to forget that, or to fully write it off as denial. Because to write it off as denial would basically be like admitting he was crazy. And he might be a little bit eccentric, but David was not crazy. Whatever it was, a frosh week bi-curious experimentation, whatever, Patrick had been feeling it too, at least a little, back then. He was sure of it.

But then David had gone and slept with Sebastien Raine and ruined everything. He may not have slept with any of those other people, but he had slept with Sebastien. At this point, that was probably his greatest regret in life, even greater than overspending on his Europe trip, even greater than that time he skipped out on one of his Dad’s work events and later found out Celine Dion had been in attendance. He regretted Sebastien more, because it had ruined the most perfect thing he’d ever known. And as amazing as things were now, where they’d gotten back to with each other, David felt sure in his gut that Patrick had cooled on any potential romantic feelings he had had.

Patrick said he wanted to be friends. He was just an affectionate kind of friend. Touchy feely. He was even like that with Styla, a little. Okay, maybe it wasn’t totally the same. But he wasn’t a guy that was obsessed with his personal space bubble, like David normally was. David just resolved himself to enjoying the physical closeness, no matter how much it made the fires of desire burn brighter and hotter in his belly.

When the movie ended, Patrick had to lean over David to reach his laptop, and he placed one hand on David’s thigh to brace himself as he reached with the other to hit the spacebar and exit the full screen mode. David felt his breath catch in his chest at the contact, and held it, trying to get his racing heart in control. It was a good thing, too, because then Patrick turned to him and he had this evil, gleeful little smile on his face.

“Did you like the movie, David?” He asked, and David rolled his eyes and smiled, then sat up and pushed Patrick out of the way.

“My turn.” He said, reaching for the track pad on the laptop, and searching for the movie he’d chosen. Beside him, Patrick stretched out languidly on the bed, leaning his elbow onto the pillow and propping his head up. His leg ran against David’s, and proved very distracting as he set up his choice.

“So, Practical Magic?” He asked, and David shook his head.
“No, as infinitely rewatchable as that one is, we did just watch it last week…” He said, and purposefully didn’t look at Patrick’s face to avoid any victorious or triumphant smiles he might see there.

“So what are we watching?” He asked, and David turned.

“In recognition of Sandra Bullock’s star power and Hollywood influence, I present to you, a massive blockbuster built around her, and perhaps unfortunately the closest she has ever come to a flop: Speed 2: Cruise Control.” Patrick just looked back at him blankly.

“Will I have trouble following the plot, if I haven’t seen Speed 1?” He asked, completely straight faced and kind of curious looking, and David felt his jaw drop and his eyes bug out of his head.

“WHAT!?” He cried, not believing what he’d just heard. His mind was racing, and he searched for the right words to express his utter shock and dismay at-- okay. Patrick’s innocent neutral expression had turned smug and smirky, and David understood, the motherfucker was teasing him again! He rolled his eyes back into his head dramatically and let out a frustrated sigh. “Don’t do that!” He said, slapping Patrick’s arm, who laughed and rolled away a little, before rolling back and putting more pressure on David than he had been to begin with.

“You’re so easy to work up, I don’t think I’ll ever get sick of this.” He said, fondly, and okay. David felt a blush rise up his neck and to his cheeks, and he tried to bite back his smile, and felt it twist to the side of his face.

“That’s not funny.” David replied, grumpily, but his smile probably gave away the fact that he wasn’t that upset about it. He hit play before scooching forward a bit so he could lay back like Patrick was.

As soon as the movie had started, Patrick had cuddled into David, laying his head on his shoulder and placing his hand open on his chest. And for the first time perhaps ever, David had trouble paying attention to a Sandra Bullock movie.

But how could he, when Patrick was so close? His scent filled David’s senses, and he kept finding himself losing track of the plot. He kept getting lost in daydreams, the kind he should not be indulging in. Not if he had any hope in hell of keeping things platonic. He wasn’t exactly making things easy for himself, that was for sure.
Part way through the movie, Patrick began fidgeting with David’s t-shirt, absently plucking at it, or
drawing shapes into the soft cotton on David’s chest or shoulder with his fingers. David wondered
if he could feel his pounding heart, or his quickness of breath. It felt a little like playing with fire,
allowing Patrick to touch him like this. Because if Patrick could tell he was romantically interested
in him, would he pull back again? Would the touching stop?

If Patrick could tell, he at least didn’t stop. They spent the rest of the movie like that, Patrick
turned in towards David, his knee kicked up a little on top of David’s, his head on his shoulder, his
hand roaming and fidgeting in an absent way he probably wasn’t even aware he was doing.

For the last half hour, David had been dying to go to the bathroom, but he had been holding it, not
wanting to ever stop cuddling with Patrick, not ever. But the end of the movie had broken the spell,
and David had reluctantly crawled over Patrick and headed down the hall. He passed a card game
on his way, but declined their offer to join them, wanting instead to rush back to Patrick, hoping if
he was fast, that he’d still be feeling cuddly for whatever the next movie was.

When David returned to the room, Patrick was waiting for him, an expectant smile on his face.
He’d slid over on the bed to the inside, and he was laying down, head propped up on his elbow.
David looked at him, and his brows narrowed for a second in confusion, not sure why Patrick was
looking at him like that. And then he looked at the laptop, and saw the movie Patrick had queued
up for them: Practical Magic.

“I thought we just watched this one.” David said, settling into the bed next to Patrick. Patrick lifted
his left arm, so that David could crawl under it to lay against his chest, and he wrapped it around
his shoulders. David wasn’t expecting it, and let out a slightly embarrassing sound when he’d
realized what was happening. He was obviously flustered, but Patrick was kind, and didn’t mention
it.

“I thought it was the ‘witching month’.” Patrick retorted, shrugging. David smiled at that, and
settled in against Patrick, getting comfortable. He was glad he’d gotten up, because now that he
was on the outside, he could cuddle into Patrick and his big comfy sweater. As nice as it was
having Patrick up against his body, he’d been thinking about that sweater all night.

David was comfortable in Patrick’s arms. Very comfortable. In fact, perhaps too comfortable.
Because before the second act was even over, his eyes began to feel heavy. Patrick had once again
begun drawing shapes onto him, this time onto his arm, with the hand he had wrapped around
David, pulling him close against his chest. The feeling was hypnotic, and very quickly, David had
found himself pulled inexorably towards sleep. He couldn’t fight it, and frankly, he didn’t want to.
The next thing David knew, it was 4:30 in the morning, and he was waking up in Patrick’s arms. Somehow, he’d ended up turning towards David, he supposed in his sleep, and had wrapped one arm and one leg over him, pinning him in place. At first he’d thought he was dreaming. It was an ungodly hour, after all, and he was being enveloped by the world’s cutest human octopus. It made more sense that this was a dream than reality.

But after a few moments, David realized this was very real, that he must have fallen asleep during the last movie. David assumed Patrick had also fallen asleep too, otherwise he probably would have woken David up to send him back to his own bed. He felt a pang of guilt, wondering if, now that he was awake, he should save Patrick from himself, and move back to his own bed. For one thing, Patrick might wake up and be very embarrassed, because this is the last thing he would want from a platonic friend. For another, maybe he’d want to kick David out, but feel too bad about it. The last thing David wanted to do was make Patrick feel uncomfortable.

The problem was, David didn’t want to get up. This was the way David wanted to wake up, every day, until forever. But he knew that he wouldn’t. He knew that he might never even get the opportunity to again. Or, if he did, it wouldn’t be for a while.

Feeling guilty, but not too guilty, David decided not to get up. He could reason that getting up would wake Patrick up, and that’s why he wasn’t doing it, but that would only be an excuse. Because the real reason David was staying, why he planned to nuzzle right back into Patrick’s warm body and fall asleep, was because he couldn’t bear to leave. He wasn’t strong enough, he didn’t have enough willpower. Perhaps that made him a bad person. He didn’t care. He drifted back off to sleep, happy and content in a way he hadn’t been in a very long time, if ever.

The next day was mostly spent studying. They’d woken up pretty early, neither of them mentioning the state they had found themselves in though both acting a little sheepish, and headed to the campus gym. David had some nervous energy to work off, and when Patrick had suggested it, he’d been all for it. He and Patrick had chosen treadmills beside one another, mostly because the ellipticals were on the other side of the room, and David was feeling a little clingy. Patrick hadn’t seemed to mind at least, chatting away as they jogged together. David grunted short replies as best he could, clearly not nearly on the same level, cardio-wise, as Patrick was.

They’d headed to breakfast after that and met Stevie, Twyla, Ted, and Miguel. Stevie had her first exam the next day, while David and Patrick’s first would be the one after. Then it was off to the library. First they studied separately, at two separate desks in the section of the library Patrick had found David in that fateful night several days earlier. David had insisted it was truly the superior place to study, and Patrick hadn’t entirely disagreed, although he thought the view might actually be a little too good, and might prove distracting.
They’d spent most of the day with their noses in their notes. David had a system of colour coding, underlining, and then summarizing those sections into bullet point notes (also colour coded). His highlighters were laid out neatly before him, and every time he’d finish with one, he’d replace the cap and carefully place it in line with the others. His pages and books were at right angles. He was fastidious in his tidiness and wanting to keep his thoughts, and his notes, organized. He had this notion that a cluttered desk would lead to a cluttered mind, which would lead to him bombing his exams. Which was perhaps catastrophizing a little bit much, but being organized didn’t hurt so he went with it.

David put every drop of energy he had into studying that day, in a way he never had before in high school. This was in part because he thought maybe he was maturing a little, and perhaps that Patrick’s responsible influence was wearing off on him a bit. But he also knew that a large part of it was the increasing stress he had over his family’s financial situation. The closer they got to exams, the closer they got to Thanksgiving weekend. And riding to Toronto on a filthy bus. But he thought he could handle the bus.

He was less prissy than he had been when he first arrived at Trent, he thought. He’d need to fully disinfect himself when he got home, of course, but he thought he could probably handle it without having another full on anxiety attack. A 45 minute boiling hot shower should be enough to wash away the filth and shame. If his Dad could even afford the hot water bill, he thought miserably. And, okay, he knew that was certainly an exaggeration, and that things weren’t that bad. He hadn’t been told they were in bankruptcy, or anything like that. But David was a worrier, and he wasn’t dumb. He was able to look at all the separate and mounting pieces of evidence, and understand the writing on the wall.

The last time his Dad had sent money, it had been less than the first, despite the fact that David’s grades were great, and that he’d been regularly calling home, without even being forced into it. He’d fired their driver, who had been with the family for years. And because Patrick liked to read the newspaper like a 75 year old grandpa, David had caught sight of an article talking about the decline of the movie rental giants, and how increased access to high speed internet across the more rural parts of North America was putting the final nail in the rental industry.

So, because David was very aware that the only way he could help with the family’s tightening financials was keeping his entrance scholarship, he took these exams seriously. More seriously than anything he’d really tried towards, ever before. And It was paying off. He felt good, he felt prepared. He felt exhausted.

After dinner, David and Patrick had returned to their room and quizzed each other until they were both too tired to continue. And they didn’t really need to continue, anyways, because they had both clearly memorized every bullet point and flash card, and it was apparent they were going to nail their exams. When David’s eyes had started drooping, Patrick closed his book and looked over at him. “Let’s go to bed.”
David glanced at the LED display of his alarm clock. It read: 8:47. “But it’s so early…” He argued, though weakly. The fact was, bed sounded good right now.

Patrick ignored him, and got to his feet. He placed his book on the desk, and then turned to David, holding his hand out. “Come, on, let’s get ready.” He suggested, and David placed his hand in his and was pulled to his feet. “Get your bag, let’s go.” Patrick added, nodding at David’s blue night-care bag that contained all his necessary toiletries and creams. Obediently, David grabbed it, and followed Patrick out the door and down the hall towards the bathroom. They shared a sink stall, brushing their teeth in companionable silence. And despite all of his worries, David felt content. Actually, it felt a little like a dream, like he was sleep walking. But that was probably just his brain being fried and exhausted, from working out in the morning and studying literally the entire day.

David was so tired, he’d expected sleep to come easily. But starting from the moment they’d returned to their room together, something just didn’t feel right. They’d both hesitated, looking at their beds, and then at each other. David didn’t know why, but it felt almost awkward. Probably because he knew how much he didn’t want to sleep alone. All he wanted to do was crawl into whichever bed Patrick picked, and drift off in his arms, like he had the previous night.

But that wasn’t something friends did. Especially not two days in a row. David had known not to get used to it, and yet with just one hit, he was already addicted. David held back his sigh as he turned away from Patrick, towards his hamper. He pulled his t-shirt up and over his head and tossed it inside, and then worked his skinny jeans down, kicking them off and doing the same. Behind him, Patrick was undressing as well, and David turned to watch the last of the show, Patrick hopping on one foot, the other kicking off the leg of his jeans. His back was turned, so David allowed himself to take in his body. The V of his back, his broad shoulders, his narrow hips and round ass and thick thighs. Fuck, he was hot. David had to turn away, to get into bed, because he was getting hard just looking at him.

David had expected sleep to come easy that night, he’d been so tired. And yet it had been elusive in a way he didn’t understand. His mind, his body, and his soul were begging for rest. And yet, he lay there, awake. He just couldn’t seem to settle. He didn’t feel right, and he thought he knew why. And didn’t like the reason. It wasn’t healthy for him, he shouldn’t be feeling the way he was feeling, he told himself. Patrick was his roommate, his friend. He was the best friend David had ever had, and he did not want to do anything to risk losing him again.

David had promised himself he wouldn’t cross the lines of a platonic friendship, and that he’d follow Patrick’s cues, when it came to the boundaries he wanted to set. He’d already been more affectionate than David could have ever hoped for, though perhaps in such way that was almost too much. Because the closer David was physically to Patrick, the more he wanted, and the harder it would be to hold back. But he was determined to be his friend, and he thought that normal friends
probably didn’t sleep with each other every night, even platonically.

And yet, his body was screaming for it. As the minutes, and eventually hours, began to tick by, he became desperate. He was beyond exhausted, in a state of near-delirium, but his brain couldn’t seem to shut off. And it had devolved, as the night wore on, into much dirtier thoughts than he really should be indulging in if he wanted to keep things strictly platonic. If he’d been of a sounder mind, he would have stopped himself. But he had no control anymore, and was just thinking of maybe jerking off, thinking that might possibly help him finally find some sleep, when he heard it.

“David?” Patrick asked, his voice barely a whisper. “Are you awake?”

David’s heart started pounding. He had thought Patrick was sleeping, and had just been thinking about him in some very salacious scenarios. He’d been planning on getting off, and hadn’t expected to be interrupted. But he was very glad about it. Because Patrick.

“Yeah.” He replied, equally quietly, and looked over at where Patrick lay facing him on his bed. The night was dark, and he could really only make out the shape of him. Other than that, he was a dark shadow.

“Nope.”

“Me neither.”

There was a long pause, and then Patrick took in a deep breath. “Could you-- do you wanna--” He stumbled, and David felt his heart beat even faster as he waited for him to finish. “Do you want to try sleeping over here?” He asked, and David concentrated on not floating away, with the butterflies in his stomach erupting into flight, the way they were. Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!, he wanted to scream, but it turned out he was no longer capable of words. So he silently bit his lips between his teeth and slid out of his bed, and into Patrick’s.

Patrick was ready for him, holding his blanket up, and instantly wrapped him up in his arms, pulling him close and nuzzling his forehead in against David’s shoulder. David instantly felt the tension he’d been holding let go. Neither of them spoke, perhaps not wanting to break the spell. And even with the stress of their first exams looming ever closer, both fell quickly into a deep, restful sleep.
As it turned out, exams had gone great for both of them, and Thanksgiving weekend was finally upon them. David had initially felt a tremendous relief, upon exiting the gymnasium after finishing his last test. He’d done well, he could feel it. He had been 100% confident on over 90% of the questions, and he thought he stood a reasonable chance on the other 10% as well. He was feeling good, he should be feeling good.

And yet the closer he got back to his room, the further into packing he got that day, the heavier his heart became. At first, he’d blamed it on having to take the bus. He was grumpy about it, and not looking forward to it. But he knew that wasn’t the real issue. The real issue was the adorable button of a roommate, currently packing all of 2 t shirts and a single pair of jeans, and a couple pairs of boxers and socks into a backpack. If you could call that packing.

David couldn’t stop thinking about him, and the closer they got to Thanksgiving, the more he couldn’t stop worrying about him going back home… to Rachel. It was stupid. It wasn’t his place to be jealous, it made no sense, if they were only friends. But David knew that wasn’t all they were. Or, at least, he knew that wasn’t all he wanted them to be. He was hopelessly, desperately in love with his vanilla, small town roommate who loved to tease him, and touch him, and make him feel like the most special person in the world. And he hated the thought of him being around her again. Right or wrong, it was how he felt.

On the Saturday morning, after they’d finished packing, David was looking up the bus schedule one last time, when Patrick had placed a hand on his shoulder, causing him to look up into those soft, brown eyes. David wondered if his swoon was visible, or if he’d hidden it, and honestly wasn’t sure.

“Hey, so I did the math, and I have time to drive you to Toronto. It’s not actually that far out of my way, if I take a less scenic route.” He said casually, and David’s heart had leapt into his throat. Patrick was smiling at him indulgently, eyes shining, as he watched the comprehension and joy spread into David’s features before he jumped to his feet and threw his arms around him.

“Really!? You’re sure!?” David cried, into Patrick’s neck because he was squeezing him so tightly. He wasn’t going to have to take the bus! He would get to drive with Patrick! For the first time all day, he felt his spirit lighten.

“No, I just offered the ride to fuck with you. You know how I love when you suffer.” Patrick replied sarcastically, and David laughed. He was actually almost feeling emotional about it, and felt a stinging of tears in his eyes, his relief was so great.
He sniffed and laughed. “You’re an asshole.”

The ride to Toronto began great, although soon David found himself drifting back to all of his earlier worries. As Patrick drove down highway 115, farm fields and ancient gas stations or restaurants passing by, David found his eyes drawn out the window, although he wasn’t really looking at anything. He was thinking, ruminating really, on everything that was stressing him out. Seeing his parents again, their money situation, how much he wanted Patrick and how wrong it was, how jealous he was of him potentially seeing Rachel this weekend…

He was just starting to spiral, to go down that dark corridor that he so often allowed himself to get lost in, when Patrick must have noticed his mood shift. Because, he reached out with his right hand, and took David’s left. He interlocked their fingers, and rested their joined hands on David’s thigh, his thumb brushing soothingly across David’s knuckles.

This was enough to stop the spiral. David looked away from the window and down at where their hands rested, before shifting his gaze up at Patrick. He’d been looking forward, at the road, but when he sensed David’s eyes on him, he turned and looked at him, really looked at him, and then offered the softest, most reassuring smile David had ever seen in his life, before turning back to focus on the road. But his hand remained, and his thumb never stopped its calming strokes over David’s skin.

Slowly, David felt a warmth start to grow from his chest, spreading down his arms and legs, and then finally, to his head. And then, with an astonished realization, David noticed his worries had seemed to melt away.

The rest of the drive was wonderful. The sun was out, David and Patrick were driving down the highway, hand in hand, and with a lighter heart, David had found himself laughing along to Patrick’s stories, and trying to make him laugh with ones of his own. They pointed out things they saw along the road, sang along with the radio, and all in all, they made it to the city much too quickly for David’s liking.

David wasn’t entirely sure that holding hands was the best idea, or how he planned to navigate the future of his friendship with Patrick, what with the intensity of how much he wanted him. He wanted his body, yes he fucking did. But he wanted his mind, and his heart too. He wanted his soul. And he didn’t know how they were going to move forward, with his feelings as strong as they were, if Patrick didn’t feel the same.
But right then, in the car, hand in hand with the radio blasting, singing along to 90s pop songs, David didn’t care. He told himself he was allowed to live in the moment, to enjoy this drive for what it was. Patrick had held his hand, not the other way around. And he hadn’t let go.

David never wanted him to let go.

When they pulled up to David’s impressive family home, Patrick had gotten out to open the door and carry David’s bag for him. He’d carried it up the long drive, until they were standing on the landing in front of the grand carved-wood double doors that would lead inside. Patrick put down the bags and turned to David. He’d shoved his hands into his pockets, and his shoulders seemed a little higher than usual, and David watched him take a deep breath, and appear to hold it. He looked at David, something sheepish in his expression, and a shy smile tugged at one corner of his lips.

“Thanks for the ride, you didn’t have to do that.” David said, after a moment, because the extended silence paired with weirdly intense eye contact was too much for him to bear. Plus, he needed to thank him, this drive was completely out of Patrick’s way, and was above and beyond the call of duty for a friend. Patrick’s shy little smile widened, causing his eyes to shine, and his dimples popped.

“It was my pleasure, David. I wanted to.” He replied, and okay. There was something to Patrick’s voice, something that took David’s breath away. It was gravelly, and serious. His eyes bore holes into David’s, pinning him in place. David thought he saw them dart down towards his lips, and for one hopeful second, he had thought Patrick might lean in to kiss him. He held his own breath, in anticipation, wishing with all his might that Patrick woud.

But then his eyes seemed to clear, and then widen, and he cleared his throat, looking away. “So I guess I should…” Patrick said, trailing off, and finally turned to look back at David, his eyes now looking a little sad and lost.

“Yeah, you have a long drive ahead of you…” David agreed. This was awkward. Why was this awkward? The silence stretched between them for a moment, neither seemingly knowing what to do next, or how to say goodbye. Maybe it was because David didn’t want to say goodbye. Maybe Patrick didn’t, either?

“Okay, well, Happy Thanksgiving, David…” Patrick said, eventually. And then that familiar cocky smirk was back, and this was the Patrick David knew and had fallen so deeply for, and he held out his arms in invitation for a hug. David didn’t need to be asked twice, and stepped eagerly into Patrick’s welcoming embrace.
“Happy Thanksgiving Patrick.” He replied into the crook of his neck, as he pressed his face into Patrick, pulling him against himself, their arms wrapped tightly around one another.

The hug was long. Possibly too long. But David didn’t want to break it. He’d started to think that maybe this was a little bit more than a friendly hug, that there was even a possibility that Patrick might kiss him, if they pulled apart slowly enough. He pulled Patrick tighter, in an effort to buy a few seconds to control his breathing and racing heart, before he planned to go for it. He was going to do it. He was going to leave the door wide open, and hope that Patrick went for it. He wanted him to go for it. Oh God, did he want that.

Eventually, after far too long and not nearly long enough, their arms stopped pulling, and David knew what came next. They were going to pull away from one another, and David hoped that their cheeks might brush, and they’d pause, their lips just inches from one another. David would look down at Patrick’s lips, and then up into his eyes. Asking him. Telling him. *Kiss me.*

It was going to happen. David could *feel* it.

And then the Goddamn front door opened, and instead of a slow separation, the two of them jumped apart, completely startled.

“Oh! David, you’re home early! And Patrick! How nice it is to see you. Did you drive David down all this way?”

It was Johnny Rose, and David had to stop himself from stomping his foot and tossing his head back to whine and cry, like a kid that had dropped their ice cream cone or had been told they couldn’t have the toy they wanted at the department store. This wasn’t *fair.* David was 37% sure they had just been about to kiss! But the moment was well and truly ruined, so David swallowed, and forced himself to focus on the present.

David might not have known whether they would have kissed or not, given the uninterrupted chance, but he did know that Patrick was now about to get sucked into a conversation with Johnny Rose, and he needed David’s help. So David stepped in, resolving to rescue Patrick from his father and get him on his way as soon as possible, before Johnny could manage to embarrass either one of them too much. But that was a lot easier said than done, and it wasn’t until 20 painful minutes later that David was waving goodbye as Patrick pulled out of their driveway.

“Nice boy, that Patrick. I like him.” Johnny said, from beside him, also waving, and David smiled
and nodded.

“Yeah.” David agreed, staring at the spot where the car had just turned out of view. He ran a hand through his hair, tugging a little at the roots before letting it drop to his side with a sigh. “Yeah, I like him too.” He added, glad for once that his Dad was oblivious to things like vocal intonations and social cues. Because David knew he would have sounded like an idiot in love, to anyone else. And with good reason, really. Because that’s what he was.

Hopelessly, helplessly, idiotically in love.

God, David was *fucked.*

Chapter End Notes

DAMNIT JOHNNY! Lol! Ok so I am really hoping you guys enjoyed that, you deserved some fluff after all that angst! And things are only going to get better from here ;) I literally can't wait to get started on the next chapter.

Your comments give me life and keep me motivated so thank you to everyone and I cant wait to hear what you thought about this chapter! ;)

Halloween

Chapter Summary

Things had gotten so much better between David and Patrick, and then Thanksgiving break had to go and burst their happy little bubble. Will things remain good, when they get back from their time off?

Chapter Notes

Ok, so first of all, I'm going to respond to every single one of your wonderful comments that have inspired me and encouraged me! I'm sorry sometimes I'm not the best at replying, I can be a bit of a bashful clam lol but every single one of your comments mean the world to me!

Second of all, thank you for being patient and encouraging me to update! I got pretty busy with a new job and running the open fic night (and writing my submission) but I'm back to 100% undergrads! The next update should be within a week or two!

Third... this chapter is 18k. Full disclosure. Hydrate, people.

...enjoy.

Edit: a huge shout out to star_gate_wars for being my early reader and aelia_weasley for hyping me up and coming up with 2 seriously kick ass costume ideas! They inspired a large chunk of this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patrick.

Patrick.

Patrick.

Patrick, are you almost here?
David stared at his phone and willed Patrick to respond. But an eternity (or at least 30 seconds) had passed, and David couldn’t wait any longer. Every additional minute he had to spend at home was tantamount to literal torture. So, taking a deep breath, he hit the ‘voice call’ button on the screen and held the phone to his ear, not bothering to hide his grimace of distaste. He was calling Patrick. Calling him. Like someone from the goddamn 20th century. Because Patrick didn’t know how to respond to texts in a timely fashion like a regular human being, and he was already 11 minutes past the time he’d told David to expect him. What other choice did David have?

The phone rang twice, before Patrick picked up. “David, I can’t answer your texts, I’m driving.” He said, not even bothering to say hello. David rolled his eyes.

“Okay, fine, but aren’t you like, on bluetooth right now?” He countered, because he couldn’t help himself arguing. He literally couldn’t. David loved to argue, and he loved to win.

“Yes…” Patrick replied, hesitant, like he could smell a trap being set for him.

“So doesn’t your phone have that thing where it reads you your texts?” He asked, and Patrick hesitated.

“David, what’s wrong with a phone call. We’re talking now, this is fine. One could argue it’s even more efficient.” Patrick responded, a little defensive, but David could hear the smile in his voice anyways. Patrick loved to tease.

“It’s the principal of the matter. You had the ability to answer my texts, and yet--”

“I don’t like the robot lady, okay?” Patrick cut in, quick and defensive like he was admitting to some embarrassing secret, and David let out a startled laugh.

“Excuse me, what?” He asked, wanting to make sure he’d heard Patrick correctly.

“The robot lady that reads the texts. I don’t like her. She’s… off-putting.” Patrick answered, and David found his cheeks were starting to ache from smiling, and he realized he hadn’t stopped since Patrick had answered his call. Patrick was the most adorable dork David had ever met. Adorkable. That was Patrick, the most adorable fucking dork in the entire world.
“Awww, Patrick, well, I feel like there’s a lot to unpack there, so let’s just put a pin in that and save it for the drive back to Peterborough.” David replied, and he heard Patrick sigh, along with the faint background noise of something loud, like maybe construction. Which was good, it meant Patrick was in the city at least. Because Toronto only had two seasons: winter, and construction season. And it wasn’t quite winter yet.

“I’m almost there, just so you know.” Patrick replied, ignoring what David had said. “Because I know that’s what you’re calling about. I’m sorry I’m later than I expected, I was stuck on one block for almost fifteen minutes. Did I ever tell you I hate this city?”

“Don’t you dare talk shit about my city, Brewer.” David warned, only half playfully. He meant the other half. David had travelled the world half over, but Toronto was and always would be the city of his heart. The thought of leaving it to head back to Peterborough was made palatable only by the facts that he would be returning with Patrick, and leaving his family far behind.

“How could I talk shit about your city? There’s nothing to criticize. Traffic is a breeze, the pedestrians are angels, bicyclists ride safely and follow the rules of the road… what’s not to love?” Patrick replied, every word heavily soaked and dripping in sarcasm. David rolled his eyes.

“It’s just bad today because the weather is nice and everyone’s out, and it’s the last day of the long weekend. So, are you--”

“David! OH DAVID, where are you?” David stopped talking at the sound of his Mother’s voice, and felt a chill pass over him, not much unlike a ghost. He had to get out of this house. Now.

“Fuck.” He whispered, more to himself than anyone, but heard Patrick chuckle in reply.

“You have a good weekend back home?” Patrick asked, and David didn’t need to reply. Patrick knew. David had told Patrick more than enough about his mother and her… dramatics. Plus, Patrick had also had the misfortune to actually have met the illustrious Moira Rose. So… he knew.

“Just get here as fast as you can.”

“The GPS says I’m one-point-six kilometers away. So, I should be there in about… an hour?” He joked, and David rolled his eyes.
“Just pay attention, I don’t want you to miss a turn and be further delayed.” David replied haughtily, and again heard Patrick chuckle.

“Maybe you should hang up and let me concentrate then, huh David?” Patrick replied, teasing, but just then, David’s mother passed a doorway, and her eyes caught with his.

“I don’t have a choice, she spotted me. Hurry--” David replied, and then hung up in a rush.
Whatever his mother had to say to him, David didn’t want Patrick to overhear.

Patrick arrived exactly seventeen minutes later, and after another ten minutes of luggage tetris in Patrick’s parents old midsize sedan, they were packed and ready to go. And not a minute too soon. David thought he might expire from exasperation if he had to stay any longer.

It wasn’t that he hated his family. Because he didn’t. It was just that it was exhausting, having to be on his best behaviour around them. Normally when he’d spend time with his parents or sister, he had the luxury of complaining, or rolling his eyes, as a vent for the annoyance that would build up inside him. But he’d been on his best behaviour this weekend. Nary a single sarcastic remark had left his lips, and he was actually pretty proud of himself.

But also fucking exhausted.

He didn’t really know why he’d done it. Behave, that is. When he’d first gone off to school, he’d been on his best behaviour because he wanted to get back in his Dad’s good graces. Because he’d wanted him to give him money, and to send him to NYU the following year. But now, David knew that money was much tighter than he’d previously been aware, and he wasn’t even sure he’d even want to go to NYU the next year, if it would mean leaving his friends.

So David wasn’t on his best behaviour to get anything, really… so why had he done it? He wasn’t actually sure. But every time he’d bitten back a snide remark, or swallowed down a backhanded insult from his sister or crushing criticism from his mother, he’d thought of Patrick. And how he thought that maybe he’d be proud of him. It was stupid. But he’d made it that far, so he was determined to leave on a good note.

“Okay, well, I’ll see you at Christmas break then, I guess.” David said, standing beside the open
door to Patrick’s passenger seat, addressing his Mother, Father, and sister, who had come to see him off. Alexis’ nose was pointed down at her phone, though, and David was pretty sure she didn’t even know he’d returned home for the weekend. Which was… a little sad. They’d been so close, when she was younger.

“Oh John, the furlough is over and our David is leaving us like a soldier off to war!” Moira said dramatically, and instead of rolling his eyes, David focused on the fond expression on his father’s face, as he listened to his mother speak. “Will he ever return to us again?” She added, even more dramatically. She’d been in high spirits until that morning, when her mood had soured and she’d been lashing out all day. It was sweet, really. David knew it meant that she was sad he was leaving.

“Now, dear, he’s only going back to school, not to fight in the Pacific. He’ll be okay.” Johnny spoke, gently patting his wife’s shoulder. “Won’t you, son?” He asked, looking at David with wide eyes, silently begging him for help with his histrionic mother.

“I have it on good authority that the armed forces would never admit me, due to my fallen arches. And my crippling fear of moths and just, insects in general. It’s not a good look on a soldier.” David replied, grimacing because just saying the word moth was uncomfortable. From the other side of the car, Patrick piped in.

“Don’t worry Mrs. Rose, I’ll take good care of him.” Patrick said, cheerfully.

“I bet you will.” Alexis replied, quietly, still staring down at her phone. Which was annoying, because she couldn’t see the death glare David was shooting her way. But by the way she smirked, he thought she knew.

“Well thank you, Pet--”

“Patrick.” David supplied.

“Thank you, Patrick. I know from speaking with David of your fastidious proclivities towards responsibility and academia. He will be in good hands!” Moira replied, mollified.

“Yeah, Patrick’s hands…” Alexis muttered to herself, and David did his best to shoot fiery lasers at her with his eyes. Not that she looked up at him to notice. She was quiet though, and standing closer to David than Patrick, so David just hoped he hadn’t heard her.
“Okay, well, I think it’s time to go…” David said, moving to sit down into the passenger seat.

“David, wait--” Johnny stepped forward, and grabbed David’s arm. David turned his head, startled to see his father’s eyes were a little shiny. Were those… tears? “It’s just… it was good to see you doing so well, son.” David’s father added, smiling fondly, and David didn’t really know what to do. Was his father going to hug him? But to David’s relief, he held out his hand instead. “I’m proud of you, son.” Johnny said, as David shook his hand, and felt a folded up cheque in his father’s palm.

“I’m… thanks, Dad.” David replied, a shy smile twisting to the side of his face as he tried to hold it back. He then turned his attention from his father, to look at his mother and sister (who had miraculously looked up from her phone to actually say goodbye). “Bye, guys.” David said, not very eloquently. His mother didn’t speak in reply, and neither did Alexis. Instead, Moira placed her right hand over her heart in some sort of dramatic solute, and Alexis scrunched her nose at him and pulled her index finger up and down like Danny from the Shining.

And then David turned away, and sat down into the passenger seat of Patrick’s car. The second the door had closed beside him, David felt all those weird, confusing feelings he’d just been experiencing start to melt away, and replace themselves with pure, unfiltered excitement. It was time to go back. With Patrick.

“Oh… I’m ready.” David affirmed. And with that, they were off.

The drive to Peterborough could have lasted all day and it wouldn’t have been long enough. The weather was gorgeous, the sky was a deep cloudless azure that made the reds and golds and oranges of the autumn leaves that much more vibrant. It set a perfect backdrop for what was happening inside the car, which was David falling even more deeply and madly in love with Patrick with every minute that went by. It was getting ridiculous. Whoever had said absence made the heart grow fonder had known exactly what the fuck they were talking about.

When they’d set off from Toronto, David had been a little nervous. He hadn’t talked to Patrick all that much over the long weekend, except for on the Sunday when Patrick had texted him to see if he wanted a drive back to school the following day, and then again that morning before he’d gotten there. David had purposely held back, trying to give Patrick space, reminding himself that he was his friend, not his boyfriend. Patrick needed to see his family. He needed to be with them, David knew how important they were to him.
He just hoped they were all Patrick wanted to see, when he went back home.

The entire weekend, David had been stewing and worrying about what would happen when Patrick left their bubble. If he went back home, would he meet up with Rachel? If they did, what would they do? The thought of them getting back together made David nauseous. For a few reasons. The first, and largest reason, being jealousy. If Patrick got back together with Rachel, after everything they’d gone though and worked to recover in terms of their personal relationship, David thought he might die of a broken heart.

The other reason it made him feel sick was the guilt that came from the thought that he should probably be happy for Patrick, if that was the case. Because… they were friends. Friends should be happy for friends, when they get a girlfriend. But David wouldn’t be happy for him, which made David a shitty friend. And that made him feel worse.

Thankfully, within just a few minutes of the car ride, all the worry and anxiety David had been carrying like a pack mule of emotional baggage all weekend seemed to just melt away. Not because Patrick had confirmed he hadn’t met up with Rachel, or that they weren’t back together. No… it was just being with Patrick. It seemed to make everything different. Better. Patrick’s presence in and of itself felt like a warm compress on aching muscles. Instantly soothing.

“Thanks for coming to get me. You didn’t have to do that.” David had said, after riding along in comfortable silence for a few minutes. Patrick had the radio playing quietly in the background, tuned to 88.1, a local indie rock station David liked, so he didn’t insist on changing. Yet. Dan Mangan was playing, and David thought vaguely how much he liked the song. *If you tryyy to be with me, I will tryyy to get by. Some say I’m a fool for waiting, but they don’t know this fool doesn’t mind...*

“Yeah, but it wasn’t far out of my way. And I couldn’t have you ride the bus with all the peons.” Patrick replied, looking over at David with a sparkle in his eye, the one he got when he teased David, and David smiled. They held the eye contact for a long beat, stopped at the stop light, and were startled out of it when a horn from behind them notified them that the light had turned green. *Oops.*

“I could have ridden the bus you know.” David replied, trying to overcome the fluttering swarm of butterflies in his stomach by focusing on something serious. Something real. And for some reason, he wanted Patrick to know this about him. That he could have done it. “I would have been okay. I mean, don’t get me wrong, I much prefer you picking me up, but I just... I don’t think I would have been okay, before. But now I would be.” David hoped Patrick knew what he meant. His voice had turned soft there, at the end. Vulnerable. Patrick looked over at him briefly and smiled, before turning his eyes back to the road.
“I know you would have been okay. You’re… I-- I know you would have been fine.” Patrick replied, his voice soft and reassuring and almost equally vulnerable to David’s. Then he cleared his throat, and turned up the music. Juliette by Hollerado had come on, a modern-classic roadtrip song, and they both sang along as they turned onto the Don Valley Parkway and headed out of the city.

A few songs later, David had turned down the radio, and Patrick took a quick glance at him before returning his eyes to the stretch of highway 401 ahead of him. “Don’t like the song?” He asked. “You can change the station if you want, or hook up your phone.” He offered. He honestly didn’t care what they listened to, he just wanted David to be happy.

“No, it’s good. I just wanted to talk to you. See how your weekend was?” David asked, perhaps a little too casually, and Patrick knew instantly he was digging for information. Like any friend would. He didn’t think it was because David was jealous or anything. Only that he was curious. Like any friend would be.

“Pretty good, although busy. My mom had saved up basically 2 months of physical labour chores for me to help my dad with. Thanksgiving was nice, we had my family over, the whole deal.”

“The entire Brewer clan?” David asked, seemingly genuine in his interest. It made Patrick smile.

“Yeah, I think the grand total was 39 this year, we’re up two since my cousin Brian had the twins.” Patrick replied, and decided to go on. Because even though he was sure David wasn’t jealous, he wanted to-- just on the off chance that he actually cared-- he wanted to let him know. That he didn’t see her. “I didn’t get to see any friends though, just family. I got back so late Friday night, then it was family stuff til I left before dawn today. I’m pretty exhausted actually.”

David was quiet for a long beat. Patrick chanced a quick glance at him, and found he was doing that cute thing he did where he’d bite his lips between his teeth. He was slowly nodding.

“So, no friends? Not even at night? No… Rachel?” He asked, and there was something to his voice that Patrick couldn’t quite put his finger on.
“No, definitely no Rachel. I’m not saying I’ll never talk to her again, but we’re done like that. And we need to put a lot of time and space between us before I could even attempt a friendship. It was way too soon.”

Again, David was quiet. Patrick could see from his periphery that David was nodding again, slowly. “I see.” He said, eventually.

“And how was your Thanksgiving, David?” Patrick asked, wanting to pull his friend out of whatever mood had shifted over him in the last 30 seconds.

“I don’t think we even have enough time for me to tell you about how obscenely torturous this weekend was. But you’ll be happy to know I was nice to them the entire time. Even Alexis, and that fourteen year old she-devil is the literal spawn of Satan, and has been for the last two and a half years.” David replied, the animation returning to his voice, and Patrick chuckled and smiled.

“You, nice?” He teased, and looked to enjoy the incredulous expression that washed over David’s face.

“I’m nice!” He argued.

“Oh, okay, sure.” Patrick agreed, though very non-committal.

“I’m nice! I’m a nice person!” David continued to argue, his voice rising and becoming slightly shrill. It just made the smile on Patrick’s face grow wider. “Say I’m a nice person.” David demanded, and Patrick couldn’t help it, he let out a laugh.

“You’re right, you’re a good person, David.” Patrick replied, and laughed again at the groan that David let out in response.

“Oh, okay, sure.” Patrick agreed, though very non-committal.

“I’m nice! I’m a nice person!” David continued to argue, his voice rising and becoming slightly shrill. It just made the smile on Patrick’s face grow wider. “Say I’m a nice person.” David demanded, and Patrick couldn’t help it, he let out a laugh.

“You’re right, you’re a good person, David.” Patrick replied, and laughed again at the groan that David let out in response.

“Okay, but you said good, but I said nice.” David clarified, very astutely. “Say I’m a nice person.”

“It’s a very nice day out, David, and you’re a very good person.” Patrick replied, teasing some more. He wouldn’t do it so much if David didn’t give him such great reactions. This time, David reacted by slapping Patrick’s arm, which caused him to lean a little closer to the center console… and Patrick. And then David didn’t lean back. And Patrick was not mad about it. “Okay, so tell me about your weekend.” He decided to ask, because he was genuinely interested, and he liked hearing
the sound of David’s voice. He could be talking about *anything*, really, and Patrick would be enthralled.

“Well, the highlight would probably be when I won a rousing game of Sleepy Mommy last night after my mother had a bit of a fit about me leaving again today…” David began, and Patrick set the car to cruise at 110 and leaned back to listen to David tell the story of his weekend. And all Patrick could think the whole time was, how much he wished he could have been there with him. And also, what the hell was *Sleepy Mommy*?

The next several days passed in a blur of fun and happiness and *schoolwork*. Patrick’s courses seemed to be picking up in intensity, requiring a little more vigilance than David’s seemed to be. Although, to be fair, David had been pretty busy with coursework lately, as well. He had essays to write and textbooks to read, like everyone else. Except he had maybe just a *little* more spare time than Patrick. And maybe Patrick was a *little* jealous.

But not jealous of having less school work. He was jealous of *Stevie*. And of Twyla, and sometimes even Ted and Miguel. And occasionally even of that creepy guy, Jake. Because they all seemed to be spending more time with David than Patrick was able to. And that just didn’t seem *fair*.

To make up for it, Patrick made sure to make every moment they spent together, *count*. They’d laugh, and joke, and have deep discussions. Sometimes they’d play fight, wrestle, occasionally devolving into tickle wars. It was disgustingly cute. Patrick was well aware of the optics. He didn’t care.

People were constantly bugging him about asking David out, asking when the wedding was. He’d been a bit worried at first, but when it became clear that David wasn’t bothered by the comments, Patrick stopped caring too. People could think what they wanted to think. Patrick certainly had no problem with people thinking he was David’s boyfriend. Patrick would *love* to be David’s boyfriend. If only that was what David wanted, too.

Sometimes, Patrick got some vibes. But then he would just write them off as his own wishful thinking. There was *no way* that David was into him like that. Because if he was, wouldn’t he have said something? Or made a move? Patrick was pretty sure he was making it *extremely obvious* where his feelings stood. Or… was he?

Things with David were getting… *confusing*. Confusing but still *amazing*. Patrick wouldn’t trade a
single confounding, boner-inducing minute of it. Although, he did feel like a guitar string pulled too tight and ready to break. It was all he could do to keep himself together, half the time. There was a reason everyone was teasing him about asking David out. It was because Patrick was following him around like a lost puppy, and he was just as clingy. It was almost embarrassing. But he couldn’t help it! If David wasn’t pushing him away, Patrick sure as hell didn’t have the willpower to stop himself.

“No! That was my route!” David cried, staring down at the colourful board and the pieces Patrick had just placed, connecting Little Rock to New Orleans. He looked despondent, and Patrick laughed gleefully as he placed down his completed ticket.

“Was it though?” Patrick asked, his voice going a little squeaky as he needled David. “Because it looks like it’s my route…” He added, smirking and leaning to his side to lean into and elbow David’s ribs. Across from them, the others laughed.

“Careful David, I think he might be a ‘trained’ professional.” Ted joked, never one to miss an opportunity for a pun, and Patrick enjoyed David’s eye roll of epic proportions.

“Cuz Pat’s got a ticket to ri-ide! Pat’s got a ticket to ri-i-ide… Pat’s got a ticket to riiiide,” Twyla sang.

“And he don’t care!” The rest of them joined in, breaking off into a fit of laughter afterwards. The only one not laughing was David. But Patrick could tell he wanted to. From the red colour of his cheeks to the vein that was popping in his temple, to the smile that was twisted completely off to one side in an attempt to hold it back, Patrick could tell that David was ready to burst at any second. He was just being dramatic, committing to his ‘bit’ about being mad.

Patrick wanted to be the reason he broke.

So, still laughing, Patrick skimmed his fingertips over David’s ribs and stomach, armpits, and back. Anywhere he could tickle, really, as David squirmed away and finally erupted into laughter. “You asshole!” He cried as he tried to get away from him, but Patrick was on him, and wouldn’t let him go.

“Whose route was it?” Patrick demanded as he assaulted David with tickles, and David tried helplessly to squirm away, out of breath from laughing.
“I hate you!” David laughed.

“I hate you? Don’t know them.” Stevie remarked, from Patrick’s other side.

“I hate you too!” David choked, and Patrick decided to have mercy on him. He stopped his attack, and let David catch his breath.

“Aww, David, we hate you too.” Stevie replied, making her voice go sweet, and Patrick wiped a tear from his eye.

By some miracle, they hadn’t wiped the board clean of its pieces in the chaos and struggle, so the game continued. For all the drama between Patrick and David and getting the longer train routes, it was Twyla that won in the end.

“I feel like you must have cheated somehow though.” David insisted, and Stevie rolled her eyes.

“Or, and hear me out here David, or maybe you just lost.” Stevie argued back, leaning over the board to poke him in the chest for emphasis.

“Hmm, that doesn’t sound right.” He replied, and Patrick laughed.

“You guys always go after the longest route bonus, but it’s all about the short trips and completing cards.” Twyla explained. “They add up!” She added, with a smile and a shrug.

“What’s next? Who’s up for Carcassonne?” Miguel cut in, and thus began a heated discussion on the next feature of their game night. They ended up playing Uno, at Stevie’s insistence, which quickly turned into a drinking game (which Patrick was pretty sure was her plan all along). It was, as usual with their group, a very fun night. And the more alcohol that flowed, the more Patrick and David seemed to melt into one another, with zero cares as to what anyone else would say.

That was the first night they slept together, after coming back from Thanksgiving. It felt like going home again, in a way that returning to Thunder Bay hadn’t even felt, the previous weekend. It was the best sleep Patrick had in days.
“No, not gonna happen.” David argued stubbornly, and Patrick smiled indulgently.

“Come on, David. It’s fun! And you’re good at ping-pong, so maybe you won’t--”

“Come on, David, Patrick is obviously desperate to get your shirt off, you can’t hold out on him like this. Let’s go, man!” Jake cut in from across the table, his shirt already off and his creepy perfect body was on full display. Gross. Patrick didn’t like Jake. He never really knew why, but he didn’t like him.

“Leave him alone, Jake.” Patrick said, tapping into whatever intimidating alpha energy seemed to bubble out of him, whenever guys like Jake or (shudder) Sebastien shared a space with David. It was jealous and macho, but Patrick couldn’t help it. They brought out the caveman in him. He turned to David. “You can just watch, David. Only join in if you want.” He assured him, and David smiled.

“Okay. I’ll hold your shirt.” David agreed, and held out his hand, so Patrick reached over his neck, grabbing the back of his t-shirt, and pulled it up over his head. When it was off, he had to ignore the knowledge that he was blushing, and his entire body would likely be showing the results, and he held the shirt out to David, making eye contact. But then David’s eyes fell to Patrick’s chest, and Patrick couldn’t help but to flex the muscles in his abs and chest and arms, smiling shyly, pleased to be checked out. Eventually, David took his t-shirt and carefully folded it.

“Good luck.” David said, a little shyly, and Patrick felt his dimples pop as he smiled back in return.

“Thanks!” He replied, feeling his adrenaline start to rise. Both because of the impending game, but also because he knew people (David) were looking at him right now, without his shirt on. Sure there were other guys, better looking guys, but David kept looking at him, not Jake. And Patrick was feeling good. He embraced the adrenaline and let it pump him up as he approached the old ping pong table in the Lady Eaton common room, in the basement under the cafeteria.

As it turned out, Patrick was not very good at sting-pong. Or, rather, Jake was very good. The crowd had cheered and laughed, as Patrick had lost his first match and been forced to turn around and stand there, waiting for Jake to either hit him with the ball (hard), or miss. He didn’t miss. ’
The crowd hissed, as the sound of the ping pong ball slapping Patrick’s bare flesh cracked through the room. *Fuck* did it hurt, but Patrick laughed along with everyone else. He was having fun.

Jake got two more shots and didn’t miss either of them, and Patrick walked away from the table with three round welts, rapidly rising across his back. He handed his paddle to Ted, who was pulling his own shirt off for a turn, and then David was on him, pulling him aside and using his hands to turn Patrick around so he could get a good look at his injuries. David hissed through his teeth and tentatively touched one with the pads of two fingers. Patrick jerked away a little, not meaning to, and David covered the welt with the palm of his hand and pressed down gently.

“Do you want some ice?” He asked, worried, and Patrick turned around to face him. He was standing very close, but Patrick didn’t pull away.

“I’m not going to be the only guy with an ice pack.” He laughed, and David rolled his eyes. “But you know what would help?” He asked, and David’s eyes brightened.

“Alcohol?” “Alcohol.” They said, at the same time, and laughed.

“Ok, let me get you a drink then, Spot.” David said, his eyes shimmering with a mischievous light.

“Spot?” Patrick asked, raising one eyebrow, his smile also rising more towards one side. David shrugged.

“I just have a feeling that nickname might stick, if you keep losing at sting-pong like that.” He bit his lips and paused briefly, trying to compose himself. “You have quite the collection of spots already.” He added, and he tried to keep a straight face, but it cracked when he jumped out of the way as Patrick tried to playfully slap him.

“Oh really? Let’s see how you do!” Patrick laughed, chasing David away from the crowd, but he slowed as David turned around and held his hands out in front of him, stepping slowly away, backwards.

“

Okay, okay, I won’t tell Stevie to tell everyone to start calling you Spot.” David said, but there was something *about* the way he said it that made Patrick narrow his eyebrows at him. David rolled his eyes and shrugged. “Okay, I’ll tell Stevie I changed my mind, and to stop doing that.” He corrected himself, and Patrick couldn’t help it, he laughed.
“Go get my drink, David.” He said, and David winked in reply, then spun around and quickly walked to the table on the other side of the large room, where people had placed bottles of this and that. Their contribution had been a bottle of rye that was a little less than half-way filled, but Patrick had no idea what David would bring him. All the bottles had been collected into one place, and people were pretty much dipping into whatever they wanted.

A few minutes later, David returned and handed Patrick an almost full-to-the-brim red solo cup of something that was definitely not Crown Royal. But Patrick didn’t care what it was, he was thirsty, and he drank half of it in three big gulps. Then he almost died as the burn hit his throat. “Holy fuck, what is in this, rubbing alcohol?” He asked, as he took another (more careful) sip. Whatever it was, it was terrible. But that wasn’t going to stop Patrick from drinking it.

“I have no idea. The Crown is gone, but there is a hell of a lot of this, in some big unmarked bottle. I think it might be moonshine.” David replied, sniffing his cup before taking a big swig and grimacing as he swallowed. “Mmm, that’ll put hair on your chest.” He said, his voice harsh and rough after taking the fiery drink.

“You’ll have to move your waxing regime ahead by a week.” Patrick remarked, and David laughed. “Even though I keep telling you you don’t need to wax.” He added, and he didn’t know why. The words had just come out of him, unbidden. He blamed it on the moonshine. Luckily, he didn’t seem to have made the moment awkward, and David instead just rolled his eyes.

“Says the guy with maybe three chest hairs, total. You don’t want to know the extent of--” David gestured to his chest with both hands moving in a circular motion. “--all this.” And now Patrick was the one to laugh.

“I think I could handle it.” He said, and this weird, intense sort of moment passed, where they held eye contact. Patrick felt an eruption of butterflies in his stomach, and a rush of blood to his cock, and his eyes fluttered down to David’s lips to see an almost shy smile there, before returning to his eyes. Fuck. Patrick swallowed, hard. And then, by some miracle (or tragedy?), the crowd erupted into cheers, breaking the bizarre spell that had come over them. David moved to see what was happening, and Patrick followed him.

When they found a place to stand where they could see the game, Patrick and David laughed and cheered along with the rest of the crowd, as they found Stevie, paddle in hand, stretching and preparing to face off against Miguel. Her shirt was off, and she wore a grey cotton sports bra with a white elastic band around the ribs that read ‘Calvin Klein’. Her oversized jeans rode low on her
hips, and her hair was wild and loose. She looked like she’d probably had a couple to drink over the course of the evening, and was having fun.

Stevie, as it turned out, was much better at sting-pong than Patrick was. It had been a close game, but in the end she’d won, and Miguel had ended up with two welts, right in the middle of his back on either side of his spine. She’d missed with her third shot, and given the crowd the middle finger as they’d booed her for it.

As the night wore on, Patrick had played three more times and only won once. And despite David’s best efforts (which Patrick suspiciously thought might be none), his new nickname seemed to be spreading. His back stung a little, even through the haze of alcohol, but that was probably to be expected, with seven ping-pong ball-sized welts covering him. It was worse than that time he’d gone paintballing in a t-shirt with his cousins.

And yet, he didn’t care in the least. If circumstances were different, he might have. Because Patrick was competitive and he honestly didn’t like losing. Except that David had been all over him, the entire night, seemingly very concerned about his wounds. He’d hovered around him, his hands skimming over his back, holding his cold drink to him at times. And Patrick could have eaten up the attention with a spoon. He preened, under it, and had spent the entire evening shirtless, as many of the other players had done. Mostly to show off their welts (or in Stevie’s case, lack there-of), but in many cases because the alcohol had begun to flow freely, and shirts had seemed less and less important, the farther into their cups they got.

“So when are you two just going to fuck, already?” Kenny, a guy from down the hall asked as he walked by them, sitting together on one of the communal couches. Kenny was a loudmouth and a jock, but not entirely a bad guy. He was just really, very obviously, super drunk. Patrick looked up at him from his position against the side arm, thinking of a reply, when David, who was cuddling in against his bare chest looked up and cut him off.

“Maybe when I’m done with your mom, Kenny.” David said, his reply razor-sharp and just as cutting, and Patrick couldn’t help it, he laughed and smiled up at Kenny smugly as David settled back in, his cheek against his upper chest as his head rested on his shoulder.

“Touche, bro. I’m just sayin’, everyone is rooting for yeh’.” Kenny replied, all friendly smiles, taking David’s comment in stride, and kind of taking Patrick by surprise.

“We’re just friends, dude.” Patrick said, and he didn’t know why he’d added the ‘dude’, it may
have just been a bit of social mimickry, because he was talking to Kenny the hoser. But it may have also been a little bit of overcompensation, too, if Patrick was being honest about it.

“Alright, bud. How’s your brews, either of you guys need a drink?” Kenny asked with a wide, goofy smile that Patrick couldn’t help but return.

“Nah man, I’m good.” He said, and Kenny nodded.

“No, thank you, Kenneth.” David said, beside Patrick.

A moment later, when Kenny was gone, Stevie spoke up from the couch across from them. “Gee, I wonder why people keep mistaking you two for a couple.” She said in her best mock-guileless tone. She looked over at David with wide doe-eyes that seemed to pierce into him. Patrick felt him bristle, and then move to sit up straight.

But to his surprise, it was Ted that spoke up. He was sitting somewhat similarly with Miguel (David kept insisting they were copying them, Patrick just thought it was cute), and piped in. “Don’t listen to anyone, guys, you are hashtag friendship goals, am I right, Miguel?” Beside Ted, Miguel nodded.

“Just do your thing, guys, don’t listen to the haters.” He agreed, and David nodded.

“Thanks, Miguel. That’s very big of you, considering I know you’ve been vying very hard for the title of cutest roommates.” David said, and Patrick laughed, and without really thinking, reached out and pulled David back against him.

They hung out on the couches for a while after that, before things began to break up. It was a Thursday, after all, and most of them had classes in the morning. They’d solidified their plans for Halloween, which they were celebrating on Saturday night. That would only be the 30th, but no one really wanted to party on a Sunday. The dorm was going to have a big floor trick-or-treat party, and then a lot of people were going to go downtown to go clubbing in costume at the trasheteria or the Vibe, depending on which one had less of a line. It was going to be amazing.

That night, David had insisted on holding a cool cloth to Patrick’s back to soothe the welts, and they’d fallen asleep together on Patrick’s bed, David the big spoon to Patrick’s little. It was absolute fucking heaven. All Patrick could think as he drifted off to sleep, was that he shouldn’t get used to this. It would be so easy to get spoiled, like this. But then, another part of him urged
himself to enjoy it, to live in the moment. Because if David was willing to give this much of himself, of course Patrick was willing to take it. And who knew when it would end?

Patrick had a really heavy course load on Fridays, and David only had one easy class (cultural studies… today they’d shown a shocking 90s arthouse film in which Ewan McGregor spent half the movie naked. Not that David was complaining.) At any rate, by 2, David was done for the weekend, and Patrick would be otherwise occupied until at least six o’clock. So naturally, David had knocked on Stevie’s door, and they’d been hanging out on her bed for the past hour (or two?), since returning from smoking a joint in the drumline.

“So, on a scale of extremely to absofuckinlutely, how in love with Patrick are you?” Stevie asked, as she leaned back between David’s legs, and he twisted her hair into braids. Stevie loved when people touched her hair, which suited David just fine. Stevie had beautiful hair, and it was so long and easy to style. He sighed.

“Is there a third, stronger and more emphatic option?” He asked, and she twisted around to look at him.

“Seriously, why don’t you just ask him out?” She asked, as if she hadn’t asked the exact same question a million times before.

“Because.” David huffed, tired of explaining himself. “We’re just friends, and Patrick only wants to be friends.” Stevie twisted back around, and David resumed his braiding.

“Okay, but how do you know that?” She asked, and David rolled his eyes.

“Because he said so. He said we’re friends. He has corrected lots of people, when they make jokes about us, he’s always quick to correct them. He tells them we’re friends. That’s all he wants to be.” David replied, and Stevie nodded.

“Okay, cool. And he said that?” She asked, and David scrunches his brows together.
“Said what?” He asked.

“Said that he only wanted to be friends. In the context that, if being more than friends was on the table, he’d still choose to only be friends.” She explained, and David hesitated, and Stevie picked up on it and dug her claws in a little deeper. “So like, he knows you’d be up for more?” She added, and she had this way of playing dumb that was so annoying. David let out a huff of frustration.

“Okay, not in so many words.” He admitted, and she laughed.

“So you haven’t told him how you feel, but you’re 100% sure he doesn’t want to be more than friends.” She clarified, and David sighed.

“If he wanted more, I would know.” He replied.

“And you’re sure about that?” She asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

“Sure enough to make a bet?” Stevie asked, and David raised one brow.

And that was how David had ended up making a bet for fifty dollars that he really didn’t have to Stevie.

But it was okay, because David was sure that Patrick didn’t like him like that. Patrick didn’t want to be anything more than friends. Cuddly, syrupy sweet friends. David understood how it would look, to everyone else. Why people thought they were dating, or should date. But they didn’t understand that Patrick was just a very modern kind of cishet guy. He was completely sure of himself and comfortable with his body and his sexuality. He didn’t let people’s perceptions bother him, like David always had. Patrick was just a cuddly guy, and he wasn’t hung up on whether the source of those cuddles came from a male, female, or nonbinary person.

So David took the bet. He bet fifty bucks he didn’t have to Stevie, who would absolutely insist on collecting if she won, that he and Patrick wouldn’t hook up. And honestly? David wasn’t worried about the money. Because he was sure, no, he was positive that if Patrick wanted more, that David would have known by that point. They’d slept together the past few nights. Surely, if romantic or sexual feelings were involved, something would have… developed? No, David was sure. Patrick
didn’t like him.

It was a safe bet. If (when) they made it to Christmas break and weren’t dating/hadn’t hooked up, David would collect his money. But if they kissed or started dating before (they wouldn’t), David would have to pay up.

That money was going to come in really handy, for the holidays.

This was a total safe bet.

They spent the next half hour sitting together, David braiding and re-braiding Stevie’s hair, talking about their planned couples costume for the next night. David would be going as Andy Warhol, and Stevie his muse, Edie Sedgwick. It was going to be legendary. Eventually Twyla returned from her Native Studies class, and the three of them started talking about their plans for Halloween.

That night, they’d decided to keep things low-key, knowing what a rager they were in for the next day. So David, Patrick, Stevie, Twyla, Ted, and Miguel had all piled onto Patrick’s bed and cuddled up for a Netflix binge-watch. They were currently working their way through Anne with an E, because Twyla had won the rock-paper-scissors tournament, although as soon as the series had started any complaining seemed to have dried right up. David had worked his way through several tissues already, and he knew for a fact that Patrick had been sniffling a lot as well. He knew, because he was of course curled up against him, tucked underneath his warm, strong arm.

Not for the first time, (more like for the millionth), David wished he could be more to Patrick. Wished that Patrick thought of him as more than a friend. Because being with him like this? Against his body, pulled tight like he was something precious Patrick didn’t want to let go of? It felt good. No, that was insufficient. It felt right.

It was all David could do not to hum in contentment, when Patrick started playing with his arm. At first just dragging his fingertips softly along the skin, sometimes playing with the sleeve of David’s t-shirt, and eventually drawing shapes, and possibly letters, into his skin. It sent shivers down David’s spine and blood rushing to his cock, but he was curled at such an angle that Patrick shouldn’t feel that, so it was okay.

Well… no. None of this was okay. What this was was either magnificent, or a tragedy the likes of
which Shakespeare could never even comprehend. It was one, or the other, or both. But nothing so ordinary and insignificant as ‘okay’. Whatever this was, between them, whatever these feelings David had… they were anything but ordinary. They were extraordinary. If only they were reciprocal.

Eventually, Ted and Miguel had left, but Stevie and Twyla decided to stay for a sleepover, and moved to David’s bed, leaving David with Patrick in his. David was very okay with that. Tonight Patrick slept closest to the wall, and curled in on David as the big spoon. He and David were turned into the center of the room, and David felt Patrick’s arm snake around his waist, pulling him in a little to get comfy.

David couldn’t help his smile, and then looked up to see Stevie across from him. Looking at him. In that very Stevie way. An entire conversation passed between them, silently, in which she commented on how cozy he and Patrick looked, and David insisted to her that they were just friends, and she said something about how they didn’t look like just friends right now, and then David remarked how she and Twyla looked remarkably similar, at this very moment. Then Stevie had rolled her eyes and closed them, and the conversation had ended.

David both did and did not appreciate Stevie’s ability to say so much, with just her eyes. Sometimes, David thought she was a witch. And honestly? It wouldn’t surprise him.

Pushing Stevie from his mind, David cuddled back into Patrick and felt the arm around his middle tighten a little, and he smiled and fell into a deep, restful sleep. The kind of sleep he only got when he shared his bed with Patrick. Which was maybe sort of a problem, but David was going to allow it. Because fuck, Patrick’s body felt good against his. And he was weak. Far too weak to deny himself, when Patrick seemed so happy of offer.

The next morning, Patrick had awoken to find not only his arm, but his leg as well, thrown over David’s snoring body. He’d also awoken to find his dick as hard as a rock, and was very glad that David seemed as solidly asleep as he was. Patrick looked over and found Stevie and Twyla still knocked out, Twyla being similarly wrapped around Stevie, as Patrick was with David. The twin beds they slept on were tiny, after all.

Patrick had a dilemma. He didn’t think he’d be able to get back to sleep, but at the same time, he didn’t want to get up. David was laying on his back, his right arm thrown up above his head, under his pillow. Patrick was curled into his right side, his arm thrown over his middle and his leg thrown
over his hips. It was ridiculously intimate, and Patrick had no idea how they’d gotten themselves into this position, but it had happened innocently. At least there was that, he told himself.

But now… he was stuck. If he moved, David might wake up. And also... he didn’t want to move. He could currently feel David’s semi-hard dick pressed against the inside of his thigh, and it was the hottest, most fucking erotic thing Patrick had ever experienced. If David were awake, he’d feel Patrick’s aching length pressing into his hip. The idea turned Patrick on more, excited him, but then he felt a wave of panic, and suddenly tried to move his hips back, make it so he wasn’t touching David… down there.

Because, what if he freaked David out? What if he caused David to retreat again? To take a step back from their friendship, to shut the door to the touching and the cuddles? Patrick thought he might die, if he had to stop touching David. David was like a drug, and Patrick was addicted. He’d even become a target for all their friends’ jokes, but he didn’t care, because David didn’t seem to either and he wasn’t cutting him off. Patrick didn’t know what he’d do if David cut him off. That’s why he didn’t want to freak him out with his crazy morning wood shoved right into his side...

Patrick carefully (and regretfully) lifted his leg off David, and rolled away just a little. But David woke up, and made the most adorable little “mmmngh” sleepy noise, and rolled to follow Patrick, wrapping his own arm around Patrick’s middle, and rolling into his side. This was pretty much a best case scenario for Patrick, so he lifted his arm so David could tuck in under it, smiled, and resolved himself to lay there and enjoy it for as long as possible. He may have even drifted off, once or twice. It was a really nice morning.

After they all eventually got up, David and Patrick had headed to the gym, and Stevie and Twyla had gone to their touch football practice. They’d joined an intramural team that Patrick still sort of regretted not signing up for, although the extra alone time with David he got more than made up for it.

Later, when everyone was back, they met up for lunch in the Lady Eaton Cafeteria. That was when Stevie dropped her bombshell.

“Okay, so David, I have good news and bad news.” Stevie said, popping a fry in her mouth and looking over at David, who had been poking at a salad he really didn’t want to eat, though he was insisting he was on a “pre-halloween diet”. He looked up at her and narrowed his eyes.

“Bad news first.” He said, not beating around the bush. Seemingly expecting his answer, Stevie calmly continued.
“I’m not going to be able to go as the Edie Sedgwick to your Andy Warhol tonight.” She said, letting the words hang. Patrick just stared, and waited for a reaction. He knew they’d been planning those costumes, and it was going to be really fun. He’d even been there when they picked out Stevie’s dress at a thrift shop downtown. He knew David had been looking forward to doing a couples costume, too, even though David wouldn’t have admitted that to anyone. David carefully placed his fork down on the table.

“Okay, and the good news?” He asked, his voice carefully level and measured.

“Well, I know as you’ve said before that, like Beyonce, you excel as a solo artist. And Warhol as a costume stands well on its own. You don’t even really need me. So…” She said, and Patrick could tell she was trying to be positive and convincing, but she knew she was doing something a little shitty.

“Okay, I’d appreciate if you didn’t use my own words to justify bailing on me on the day of Halloween.” David replied, and he was taking it really well. Much better than Patrick would have expected. And then Patrick realized, that David was controlling his reaction, when really his feelings were a little hurt. And he couldn’t help the protective wave that surged over him.

“You guys were talking about this last night, what happened?” Patrick asked, needing to know more. He didn’t want to be mad at Stevie, but he was feeling a little annoyed at least. Stevie gave Twyla a sheepish look.

“The girls on the touch football team kind of wanted to throw together a last minute group costume, and meet up at the bar…” She admitted, and Patrick rolled his eyes. So Stevie was bailing on the costume and she was planning to bail on them at the bar, too. With Twyla, no less! Although, Patrick was having a hard time being mad at that, because all he could think about was that David would have two fewer potential dance partners to take him away from Patrick. And they’d still have the pre-party on the floor with Styla, anyway…

“We’re really sorry, David…” Twyla chimed in, leaning forward and reaching out to place her hand over David’s. Patrick watched David visibly melt, and the annoyance roll off of him. He was left looking a little sad, though, and Patrick wished he could do something about it.

“It’s fine. What are you going as?” He replied, and Twyla’s face brightened. She opened her mouth to reply, but Stevie cut in.
“Slutty alcohol.” She said, deadpan. Patrick choked on his iced tea.

“Excuse me?”

“Exactly what it sounds like, we pick our favourite booze and dress up as a bottle. The idea is, free drinks all night and they’ll know exactly what to order.” Stevie replied with a shrug.

“Where does the ‘slutty’ part come in?” Patrick asked, genuinely curious.

“Well, we’ve got to look cute, Patrick!” Twyla replied, and Patrick laughed.

“Oh, of course, what was I thinking.”

“So I guess Warhol will have to be without a muse tonight…” David said, with a sigh.

Across from him, Stevie’s eyes went bright. “About that. You know, I was thinking…”

“For the last time, David, I’m not tucking.”

“Okay, it’s just that you are the manliest Edie Sedgwick I’ve ever seen…” David retorted. Patrick eyed himself in the mirror.

“That’s because I’m a man, David.” In the reflection, Patrick could see David behind him roll his eyes, and then rake them down his body almost greedily. Patrick tried not to too obviously flush under his appraisal.

“It’s just, that dress does not leave anything to the imagination…” David replied, and now it was Patrick’s turn to roll his eyes.
“Stop staring at my dick, David.” He said, trying to keep the smile he was holding back from coming out in his tone, which he wanted to be stern, to tease David. David took a long sip of his drink before clearing his throat.

“Okay, it’s just that I can’t…” He said, and Patrick both laughed and groaned in response.

“That’s it, I’m changing. Generic baseball player it is.” Patrick said, moving to pull the dress up and over his head. He wasn’t really going to change, but he wanted David to try to stop him. He wasn’t disappointed, when David scrambled up from his seat and over to him, grabbing his arms in an effort to stop him from changing out of his dress. David was so close now, Patrick could smell his cologne. Just his proximity was enough to cause a twitch of interest in his cock. Which, as David had so delicately put, was currently covered only by a dress that left very little to the imagination.

“No! No!” David said, as Patrick put up a play struggle, causing David to wrestle with his arms a little. They both laughed. “No, please Patrick, will you be my Edie?” David asked sweetly, when Patrick had stopped resisting. Patrick smiled at him indulgently.

“Fine, but you owe me, big time. And you have to stop staring at my crotch.” Patrick replied, and David’s smile turned mischievous, twisting to the side of his face. His eyes sparkled, as he replied.

“No promises.” And then he took a long sip of his drink, and headed back to his seat in the corner. Patrick turned back to the mirror.

“I still don’t know how I let Stevie talk me into this in the first place…” Patrick said, staring at his reflection with more than a little apprehension.

“I’d say Ted had more to do with it than anyone, he seemed determined that you be my Edie. I wonder what that was all about?” David replied. He was back to sitting in his rolling desk chair, one leg crossed over the other, sipping his vodka soda, and watching Patrick get ready. He wasn’t exactly helping with Patrick’s nerves, watching him the way he was, but at the same time…Patrick didn’t entirely hate putting on a show for David, either. He liked the idea of David’s eyes on his body.

“I think he just didn’t want to be the only one in drag.” Patrick replied, eyeing the way the knit of the orange mod 60’s tube turleneck minidress hugged his body. The dress was sleeveless, and came down to his lower thigh above the knee. He didn’t have the right boots for it, but they’d
improvised the best they could.

“Oh, he would have been far from the only one in drag. I think half the guys on the floor will be Drag Race Queens. Ted might not even be the only Laganja.” David quipped, sipping at his drink. Then he rose, and came to stand again behind Patrick in the mirror. He plucked at the shoulders, arranging the dress so it fell just right, as he regarded Patrick’s reflection. “But don’t worry, you’ll be the prettiest.” He added with a wink, and Patrick couldn’t help the full body blush that scorched through him like wildfire.

A tight “Thanks” was all Patrick could manage. His cheeks ached as he tried to hold back his smile, his dimples popping hard. He ducked his head down shyly, before lifting it and finding David still looking at him, a little fondly, if Patrick wasn’t mistaken. Then Patrick felt David’s hand grasp his own, and he was being tugged towards their desk.

“Come on, it’s time for hair and makeup.” David said, with a lot of enthusiasm. And Patrick couldn’t help it, hearing David so excited about Patrick being a part of his couples costume made Patrick feel a lot better about going a little outside his comfort zone on this. Patrick knew he would do anything for David, if he was being honest. And if he was also being honest, he’d go a hell of a lot farther than dressing up in a silly couple’s costume for Halloween. He didn’t know that he’d go so far as killing a man for David, but he didn’t not know that he’d go that far, either… (Kidding. sort of.)

A little while later, the transformation was almost complete. David had brushed and teased Patrick’s lengthening hair to mimic Edie’s off-centre part and volumized pixie cut. David had gone heavy on the eye makeup, and light on Patrick’s lip colour. He’d contoured his cheeks, highlighting his cheekbones, and fixed big gaudy clip-on earrings that Twyla had so kindly donated to his ears. Lastly, he’d applied fake eyelashes, and they were finally done.

Patrick had found himself reacting, as David had leaned in so close to him, feeling his soft breath on his face as he applied the perfect wings to Patrick’s liner, or making sure he aligned the lashes just right. And getting a boner while wearing a knit minidress was not the best idea, not that he had much choice in the matter. It hid nothing, though David either didn’t notice, or was too kind to say anything about it.

When David was done, Patrick walked across the room to the full length mirror, to admire David’s handywork, and get the full effect. It was… certainly something. Patrick had to admit… he didn’t hate it. There was something freeing, in dressing up as something else. And there was something a little exciting and empowering, in dressing up as a sexy woman. Especially one meant to be hanging off the arm of Andy Warhol all night. And David looked great in black.
It didn’t hurt that David didn’t seem to be able to stop staring. Patrick assumed (or hoped, rather) that it was the good kind of staring. He didn’t hate the idea of David checking him out one bit, he found.

As he checked himself out in the mirror, he spoke a thought as it came to him out loud. “You know David, I don’t think me dressing up as your muse is going to do anything to stop the rumours going around about us…” He turned to look at David, who had returned to his seat in the corner and was quirking one (temporarily grey) brow at him from over his vodka soda.

“Oh, and you suddenly care about the rumours?” He asked, not seemingly concerned in the least. It put Patrick at ease.

“No, it’s just, I wanted to make sure you’d be okay with it. If, you know, they got worse. After.” Patrick replied. He’d been kind of thinking about this, ever since he’d agreed. He’d been so buoyed by David’s and Ted’s enthusiasm, he’d kind of forgotten at first. But later, when it settled in what he had agreed to, Patrick remembered how worried he was about he and David’s relationship. How fragile things still may be. Patrick didn’t want to do anything that might sacrifice what they had between them. And making David uncomfortable over increasing rumours seemed like an actual, genuine risk. Maybe one that Patrick shouldn’t be taking… was it too late to switch back to his generic baseball player costume? Yes, right?

But luckily, David made it easy on Patrick, and rolled his eyes. “I could care less about what the peanut gallery has to say, Patrick. Unless… you care?” He asked, and Patrick laughed.

“I think the costumes are fun, and I don’t give a shit about what anyone else has to say about it. We’re friends, right?” Patrick replied, and watched as a complicated series of emotions seemed to cross David’s features in a flash, before he settled on a soft smile, and nodded his head.

“Yeah, for sure. Friends.” He said, still smiling softly (or was it sadly?), and he took a sip of his drink.

A couple hours later, Patrick was several drinks deep and feeling loose. He was having a great time. He’d been getting compliments all night on his Edie Sedgwick, and David was the sexiest Andy Warhol that Patrick had ever seen. He’d noticed a few people noticing David, and he wasn’t really proud of the way that had made him hang off of him, in a sort of claimatory way. Like, back the fuck off, everyone. David was here with him.
Except that David wasn’t there with him. Well, not in that way, at least. But the farther into his drinks Patrick got, the more he seemed to forget that fact. It was like the drunker he got, the more he wanted to be David’s boyfriend. And he already wanted that a lot, even when he was sober.

“How much do you want to bet that Ted’s been practicing death drops in his room for Miguel all year?” David asked, leaning in close and speaking into Patrick’s ear so his voice would carry over the voices and music of the floor party. “Remember that week when he was limping, mysteriously?” He added, and Patrick laughed. Ted had just fallen into (yet another) Laganja-esque death drop, and the crowd had cheered and whistled for him. Ted was into his costume. He and two other guys from the floor that had dressed up as other Drag Race Queens had already had a runway and lipsync battle. Patrick had to admit, it had been a lot of fun.

“Ted? Are you kidding me? He’s been practicing death drops since the first time he saw Alyssa Edwards on season 5.” Patrick laughed, and David elbowed his ribs.

The party had raged from about 8 until 10. Almost everyone on the floor had participated, just about every single room had an open door, and instead of candy, they’d been trick or treating with shots. Both Patrick, David, and all their friends were more than a little tipsy by the time they’d stumbled down to the bus stop to get on the Trent Express and head downtown to the bar.

Stevie and Twyla were wearing tank tops and little short shorts, despite the chilly late October evening. Stevie had a hand-drawn Jack Daniel’s label pinned to her front, while Twyla had Captain Morgan. Ted as Laganja and Miguel as James Herriott were also in tow, as well as Jake as a (Patrick wasn’t sure… construction worker?), and several others.

When the bus came, they piled on and packed in like sardines. David had led them onto the bus and into the back corner, and Patrick had crawled onto his lap almost immediately, knowing that there wouldn’t be enough seats for everyone. David’s hand snaked around his waist and held him in place by his hip, and Patrick tried not to literally shudder with need and grind himself down into him. He was fairly sure he’d succeeded in refraining himself, but only fairly sure. He was pretty drunk.

The ride into town was bumpy and wild. Just about every single person on the bus was drunk, and the crowd had broken into several songs along the way. Also along the way, David’s hands had begun to roam, down Patrick’s sides and to his legs, fingertips splaying out over the exposed skin below the hem of the orange knit dress he wore. Probably unconsciously, David played with the hem, and snuck his fingers just underneath. Patrick held his breath, hoping not to do a single thing to make David stop.
He felt a little bad, as a voice that was very quiet and echoey at the back of his mind told him that David was drunk and probably didn’t know what he was doing. Patrick should really stop him, or bring his attention to it. So David could have the option to stop, if this wasn’t something he wanted to do. He probably didn’t even have any idea he was doing anything. Just absently fidgeting. Patrick should tell him… But he couldn’t do that, because he was enjoying it too much. And besides, Patrick was drunk too, and he couldn’t be expected to be a saint.

He leaned into David, his arm holding himself up around David’s shoulders, and he played with the short hairs at the base of his neck. David shivered, and looked over at Patrick with this happy, shiny, shy smile. And for a second, it was like they were alone on the bus. Despite being packed in with 100 others, it was as if just for a moment, they’d all just disappeared.

Patrick swallowed, and looked down at David’s lips. And then something hit Patrick’s head, and broke the spell. Someone had bunched up a piece of paper and thrown it at him. “Hey, loverboys!” It was Stevie. Patrick made a mental note to kill her, later. “So the football girls are going to the Vibe, where are you going?” She asked, twisting around in the seats one row in front of David and Patrick.

David made a face. “I’m just not feeling the Vibe, I don’t think.”

“It’s just not his vibe, tonight.” Ted piped in, and Patrick thought he could hear it, as all of their eyes rolled in unison.

“Are you sure? It would be fun to dance with you guys!” Twyla said, and she seemed a little disappointed. Patrick wondered if his smile had turned smug, as he thought about all the people that wouldn’t be able to dance with David, if they didn’t go to the Vibe.

“You’ll have plenty of guys to dance with, Miss Malibu.” David replied, and Twyla smiled and winked, and Stevie threw her arm around her.

“Guys can buy me as many drinks as they want, but as long as I get a dance with Jenny, I’ll be going home happy.” Everyone’s eyes snapped to Stevie.

“And who is Jenny?” Patrick asked, reaching forward to nudge her. Stevie shrugged. She was definitely drunk, and probably hadn’t meant to say that. Twyla was smiling so brightly, like the secret was finally out and she could finally say something.
“She’s this girl on our team, and Stevie has had the biggest crush on her!” She gushed, and Stevie rolled her eyes and then covered them behind her hands.

“Suddenly, I think I’m understanding a little better why you ditched me at the last second.” David said from underneath Patrick, but he settled his arms around Patrick’s waist a little tighter, and pulled him in. “Although, everything seemed to work out.” He added, giving Patrick a little smile, causing every butterfly in Patrick’s stomach to erupt into flight.

David and Patrick had split from the rest of the group when they’d gotten downtown, heading not to the Vibe, but to the Trasheteria instead. They had a big Halloween party going on, and it was a little more rock’n’roll, which was more Patrick’s style. He wondered vaguely if that had been on David’s mind, when he’d said they’d be going there instead of the other club, with everyone else.

Whatever the reason, when they’d finally gotten through the line and ordered their first drinks, Patrick was not thinking about it anymore. The music was loud, the bass was thumping, and there were people everywhere. David stood so close to Patrick as they drank, that he was practically riding his thigh. Again, not that Patrick was complaining.

Then the song changed, and they’d sort of naturally just started dancing with each other. It was hard not to, the beat was so infectious. Feeling the need to cut loose come over them, they both drained their drinks, left them on the bar, and Patrick grabbed David’s hand and pulled him to the dance floor.

Patrick didn’t know what he was expecting, when he’d grabbed David and dragged him into the center of a writhing mass of horny people. He also had sort of forgotten the fact that he was wearing a mini dress… That definitely could have made things awkward, but by some miracle, David didn’t seem to mind. And from the feeling, he sort of more than didn’t mind. If the firmness of his dick was any measure, he didn’t seem to mind at all. His hands started on Patrick’s hips, before snaking around and pulling him closer. His leg slotted in between Patrick’s bare thighs, and they started to grind.

When they’d first started to dance, Patrick could still hear that voice in the back of his mind: he just wants to be friends, he’s only your friend, he doesn’t like you like that, and Patrick had done his best to hold back. But soon, he couldn’t help but let the thumping baseline and the hot, sinful energy of the thronging crowd wash over him, intoxicate him, until he and David felt anonymous amongst the costumed strangers, and they let themselves go completely.
Anything they’d been carrying around or worrying about until that moment was gone, and all that was left was the music, each other, and the way their bodies moved together. Patrick was as hard as a rock, and so was David, but they didn’t care. Patrick’s dress was hiked up and David’s thigh pressed insistently between his own as they danced and grinded against each other anyways, in spite of their obvious erections, maybe because of them. And for some reason, despite the knowledge that this wasn’t real life, that it was almost certainly a one-time-thing, none of that mattered and everything was… perfect.

By some seeming unspoken agreement between them, David and Patrick danced like they were lovers, despite being nothing of the sort. Patrick didn’t know if it was just the alcohol, or maybe some sort of Halloween spell, but he was thoroughly and completely entranced, hypnotized by the thudding bass and the feeling of David’s body against his own, and he wouldn’t have been able to stop if he tried. And from the looks of it, David was just as enraptured in the moment as he was. He didn’t want to stop either.

Objectively speaking, Patrick knew that this didn’t mean anything to David, romantically at least. He wasn’t looking for more, from Patrick, beyond a bit of dirty grinding on the dance floor. He tried to remind himself that dirty dancing did not a relationship make. But David was into it, at least for now. So Patrick was going to soak up every goddamn second of it, because who knew when the ride would end?

Several songs later, they were sweaty and out of breath. “Do you want to get a drink!?” Patrick shouted into David’s ear. Because his head was swimming, and he thought he might do something dumb, like try to kiss David if they didn’t stop dancing. They returned to the bar to order more drinks. Patrick got a beer, and David got another vodka soda.

They hung out there for a couple songs, drinking their drinks and catching their breath. A couple people they vaguely knew from the dorm waved, or came over to say hi, but no one they were close with. It seemed that everyone else had gone to the Vibe, as well. But Patrick didn’t mind being alone with David one bit. He didn’t have one iota of FOMO over not going to the Vibe with all their friends. There was something to be said about being able to dance with David without being mercilessly teased afterwards.

“Your costumes are great!” Some random guy in a Hufflepuff robe and scarf said, leaning in between David and Patrick so he could be heard. Patrick still didn’t quite make him out.

“Sorry!?” He shouted, miming with his hand to his ear that he couldn’t hear the guy.
“Your costumes! They’re great!” The guy repeated, slower and louder. Patrick smiled and nodded.

“Oh! Thanks!” Patrick replied loudly, before taking a sip of his beer. The Trasheteria wasn’t exactly the best place for conversation.

“Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick, right!?” The Hufflepuff asked, and as Patrick began to shout ‘yeah!’ back, David replied ‘You’re very perceptive!’ back at the same time. They looked at each other and laughed.

“Are you guys a couple!?” The guy asked with a smile, waving his finger back and forth between them, miming his question along with his words. Both Patrick and David both shook their heads immediately, and perhaps a little too emphatically.

“No, just friends.” They both said, again in unison, and then Patrick’s eyes caught David’s and the moment seemed to stretch on. There was something in their eye contact, heavy and intense, it was like entire soliloquies of unspoken words clambered out of both of them, only to crash into the other, unnoticed. Then the stranger spoke, and broke the spell.

“Well your costumes are great! You should enter the couples contest!” He shouted, pointing at a registration table with Dracula sitting behind it, and, oh, couples contest? Patrick was already nodding, turning to face David and unintentionally sort of cut the guy off in the process.

“Let’s enter!” Patrick enthused, leaning close to David’s ear so he could hear him. David’s smile twisted on his face, almost indulgently.

“You go order more drinks!” David replied, wrapping his hand gently around the back of Patrick’s neck and tugging him in close, to speak into his ear. This time, Patrick couldn’t hide his shudder of desire, though David kindly didn’t mention it. When he pulled away, Patrick still felt a little dazed, but he nodded. Then he turned and headed towards the registration table that guy had pointed to, and wondered if he and David had a real shot at winning. There were a lot of great costumes there that night, after all…
Patrick had only been gone about 30 seconds, when that Hufflepuff guy came back over. He had that look in his eye, one that David thought he knew so well, and he was already wracking his brain for excuses as to why he couldn’t dance with him. Would “because I’m a Slytherin” be good enough?

Normally, David wouldn’t have minded being hit on by a guy like this. In fact, he would have usually quite enjoyed it. He was actually pretty good looking, if in a slightly generic way, and he had really nice straight, white teeth. A clean mouth, as David would call it.

But clean mouth or sloppy mouth, David just wasn’t into entertaining any gentleman (or woman, for that matter) suitors this evening. No, this evening was all about Patrick. David’s own muse. His delicious little Edie Sedgwick. Because despite the fact that Patrick only wanted to be friends, he seemed to be down for a little more tonight, whether it was the booze or Halloween or what. And if Patrick was down for more, and this was a one time only, you snooze you lose type situation, then David wanted to clear his dance card for the entire evening and make himself 100% available for him. Because there wasn’t one single person in that club that could compare to Patrick, even if he didn’t want anything more than a little dance floor grinding on a night famous for wicked deeds and debauchery.

David was preparing to let the guy down easy, when he leaned in and spoke directly into David’s ear. “Hey, is that guy you were with dating anyone!?” He asked, catching David completely off guard. He jolted back away from the guy, eyes wide.

Well, fuck, it seemed Mr. Hufflepuff wasn’t here to ask David to dance, at all.

The costume contest had been way more time consuming and labour intensive to sign up for than it was worth, considering there was an amazing Rocksteady and Bebop milling around the place that were already clearly going to win the competition. By the time he was done, Patrick was wishing he’d skipped it entirely, and just stayed and had another drink with David. Maybe they even could have already been back on the dance floor, by then. He was slightly annoyed, or as much as he could be through the happy haze of adrenaline and alcohol, as he turned and started pushing his way back through the crowd, making his way back to the bar.

Patrick’s eyes scanned the bar until they fell on David. He ignored the loopy, sort of warm
feeling that came over him every time he saw David after more than a couple minutes apart. Was it stupid to *miss* someone, when they were standing less than 50 feet away? And for that matter, was it stupid to miss someone *while you were still talking to them*, because the moment was just so perfect and you wished it could last forever, and you’re already mourning the loss of it before the time is even over?

Okay, maybe Patrick had had a few too many to drink, maybe it was time for a water…

At first, all Patrick noticed was *David*. But then he got closer, and he saw: David was *with someone*. It was that fucking Hufflepuff guy! And he was leaning in, speaking into David’s ear. Patrick stopped in his tracks, and swallowed only to find his mouth had suddenly gone bone dry. He watched, as the guy laughed, and David shook his head, and Patrick couldn’t tell if it was a shy and pleased smile on his face, or an *uncomfortable* one, but it didn’t matter. Every jealous bone in Patrick’s body was on fire, and adrenaline washed through him in a wave, as Patrick watched the guy snap the end off his wand (it was also a pen?) and write his number on a bar napkin.

Was it just Patrick, or had the lighting in the room gone a little… red?

And had the music just changed to those sirens from the *Kill Bill* movies?

David took the napkin from the guy with what honestly looked like a grimace of distaste, although Patrick wasn’t noticing much at that moment. He was instead focused on the way his blood pumped in his ears, and the heady, consuming feeling of jealousy that seemed to be paralyzing him in place. This was *not* the way a friend was supposed to feel, when they saw their friend score a number at a bar. Patrick was a *terrible* friend.

No… Patrick was *terribly in love with* David Rose.

Holy *fuck* was he in love with him. His love was like an ocean, and he was drowning right in the fucking middle of it. And he didn’t know what to do. He stood there, frozen, because *he didn’t know what to do*.

And then the guy was leaving, and David looked up and saw Patrick, watching him. He caught his eyes, and smiled and waved. And despite the forest fire currently consuming his heart and body, Patrick managed to at least somewhat approximate a smile, and wave back. And for a miracle, his legs started working again as well, and he started to make his way forward.
The blood was still pumping loudly in Patrick’s ears, almost louder than the music, when he returned to David’s side. The orange knit of his dress was so tight, Patrick almost wondered if David could see his heart pounding. But despite all that, Patrick noticed that something seemed a little off about David, when he returned. He didn’t seem as happy as a guy that just scored a number from a not-so-ugly-guy should be.

“What did that guy want?” Patrick found himself asking. Because he needed to know.

David sneered. “Someone’s got an admirer.” He said, and there was something to his voice that Patrick just wasn’t getting. Why didn’t he seem happier?

“Well duh, you look hot.” Patrick said, leaning in so David could hear him. He hadn’t really meant to say it, but… it was true. Even with his sprayed white hair and brows and the funny glasses, David was a snack. Patrick was surprised David didn’t have more numbers. Although it probably hadn’t helped his game out that Patrick had been basically hanging off of him the entire night.

David rolled his eyes and shook his head. “No, not me.” He said, and he sounded… a little bitchy. And then David handed over the napkin, where the guy had written ‘Evan (call me)’ with a lightning bolt symbol, along with his number. Patrick stared at it for several seconds, as his brain tried to comprehend what he was looking at. He felt like an engine that just wouldn’t get into gear, and then: *click*. “Ohhhhhhhhh.” He said, finally getting it. The guy had been asking David about *him*.

Relief washed over Patrick, and suddenly, it was like he could breathe again. For a few minutes there, he’d been sure the crowded atmosphere of the bar had been drained of oxygen and he would asphyxiate at any second. But no, it had just been his insane and irrational jealousy all along. This was getting out of hand. “Yeah, it seems you’ve been ‘inspiring’ a lot more than Andy Warhol, tonight.” David replied, a little bitchy if Patrick was being honest, but he wasn’t listening. He was staring down at the napkin in his hand.

A guy had given this to David, for him. A pretty cute guy, who also happened to be a Hufflepuff, had given Patrick his number. The first guy to ever hit on Patrick, in his entire life, had wanted Patrick to “call him”. This was… huge. This was major. This was supposed to be what Patrick wanted, what he needed. A distraction from David. Maybe, potentially, his first boyfriend. Or at least first boy kiss.

Patrick stared at the napkin, and then looked up at David, who was regarding him somewhat trepidatiously. Then he looked back down at the napkin.
He didn’t want it.

He crinkled it into a ball, and threw it over his shoulder.

David watched him do it, his eyes wide with surprise.

Patrick looked back at him, and the blood started pumping in his ears again. But this time, it wasn’t jealousy. It was adrenaline and determination. Because *fuck it*. Patrick knew what he wanted to do, what he *had* to do. And in the heat of the moment, the adrenaline and relief and confusion still swirling around in his brain, Patrick seemed to forget all the reasons he’d been repeating to himself for months. The reasons *not* to kiss David Rose.

In that moment, Patrick couldn’t think of a single Goddamn reason not to.

And so, he did.

*Goddamn* did he kiss him.

The first thing Patrick did was reach out to grab David, any part of him, and pull him towards him. He managed to grasp his fingers in the front of David’s shirt, and yanked him forward. David looked surprised, but then this pleased little smile bloomed on his lips, and then it was gone because his mouth was occupied with *other* things than smiling.

As soon as he was close enough, Patrick wrapped his other arm around David’s waist, and pulled their bodies together. Their hips met at the same time as their lips. Patrick could feel, more than hear, David’s soft little ‘*Oh,*’ right before Patrick’s lips touched David’s for the first time. For a long moment, they stood there, lips just pressing softly into one another, and then David made another soft little mewling sound, and Patrick felt his palm caress his cheek.

And then their lips began to *move*.* And Patrick wanted to *cry* it felt so good. It felt so *right!* Never before, in his entire life, had anything ever felt so goddamn fucking perfectly right and Patrick wanted to *cry.* Maybe he was crying? He tasted salt, as he parted his lips and probed forward with his tongue, but that could just be the salt of their sweat. They’d been dancing all night after all...

The kiss was glorious, and Patrick never wanted it to end. Distantly, *very distantly*, there was a
voice screaming in utter terror that he’d just fucking everything up, and ruined his friendship with David forever. But the voice was very quiet, and the music was very loud. And David was an extremely good kisser. It wasn’t long before he didn’t hear it at all.

When they finally pulled apart, they were panting, out of breath, and both of their eyes were wide and shiny, and they smiled brightly at one another. David looked like he was in shock. Then, he was shaking his head, as if to clear it, and he looked at Patrick like he had grown a second head. But he didn’t look… upset. No, the opposite, really. He looked… happy. Really happy. “What was that!?” David asked, loudly and somewhat incredulously.

“I’m sorry, should I not have done that?” Patrick asked in reply, still very much in shock himself. He lifted two fingers and pressed the pads against his lips, then he pulled them away and looked at them, before looking back up to David. Patrick wondered what he might look like, in that moment. Like someone who had been locked in a cave their entire life, who was just now seeing art, and beauty, and nature for the very first time? Just completely and utterly awe-struck? Because that was how he felt.

David was laughing, and shaking his head, and smiling wider than Patrick had ever seen him smile before. His eyes were shiny, like he was holding back tears. “No, no you definitely should have! But, what was it!??” He replied, and the relief Patrick felt was like nothing he’d ever experienced. David… David liked it! ‘You definitely should have’. Patrick’s heart was racing so hard, the thought it might explode. He felt giddy, and light, and all he wanted to do was kiss David again. But instead, he grabbed David’s hand and pulled him towards the entrance, and then out in the crisp autumn evening.

The chill of the air was a shock to their damp, overheated skin, but neither of them seemed to notice. “What…” David said, seemingly not able to put two words together. “You…” He tried, failing again to create a sentence. “Kiss…"

Then they were around the corner, and Patrick stopped, and turned to face David. “You…”

“I kissed you. And if it’s alright, David, I want to kiss you again.” Patrick replied, not knowing where the words or the confidence was coming from, but knowing without a shadow of a doubt that if he wasn’t kissing David again within 30 seconds, he might very literally perish from pure need. Luckily for Patrick, David seemed to be very on board with that plan.

This time, their kiss went deeper, right off the start. Both of their arms wrapped around the other in a desperate attempt to pull them closer together. But that wasn’t possible. Feeling heat and passion wash over him, Patrick started walking David backwards, until he bumped against the wall, and then he kept kissing him with reckless abandon. Soon, his hips started to grind, much like they’d done on the dance floor, but now with purpose.
David moaned into Patrick’s mouth, and for whatever reason, that sent the first coherent thought he’d had in minutes to his brain like a lightning bolt, and for just a second, it was like cold water had been splashed over him. David wasn’t… this wasn’t… David wouldn’t hook up with him, if he didn’t want more, right? This wasn’t some one night stand hookup, like Sebastien? Suddenly, Patrick felt stricken with panic. Because he didn’t think he’d be able to deal with the loss, if this turned out to be just a one night only Halloween special.

David must have noticed his panic, because he placed his palm on Patrick’s chest, over his heart, and he looked into his eyes. “What’s wrong?” He asked, and his voice sounded deeper and a little raspy from shouting over the music all night.

Patrick bit his lip, and considered lying. Not sharing his worry. Because sharing what was on his mind would mean admitting to David the depth of the feelings he had for him, the feelings he’d been trying to hide for the last month and a half. The feelings Patrick had fallen asleep worried about, every night. Just terrified that they would scare David away, that he wouldn’t reciprocate them and he’d decide Patrick couldn’t handle being his friend. And then they’d go back to being nothing again. And Patrick knew he couldn’t handle that. An icy ghost hand squeezed Patrick’s lungs from the inside, as he thought about what he was going to say next.

“David, if this is-- I can’t do this, if it’s only for tonight.” He said, the words rushing out of him. He cupped David’s cheek with his palm, and stared into his eyes. His own likely looked anguished and broken, as he waited for his reply. But David just looked confused.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“I mean, I like you too much. I can’t do this, if it’s just a one night stand. I-- I want more David.” Patrick said, and then let out a big sigh. “I want more.”

David’s answering smile was so wide it almost met his ears. This time, Patrick was certain that the shine in his eyes were withheld tears, and he started nodding, and lifting his arms around Patrick’s neck to pull him in.

“I want more too.” Was all he said, before their lips met again with a crash. And then the two of them were lost to each other and dead to the world, for the next 5, or 10, or 30, or maybe even 60 minutes, making out against the side of the building, all passion and tongues and teeth. Panting, moaning, groaning, grinding, laughing, smiling. Together. Until people started streaming out of the club to go catch the last bus back up to Trent.
David had taken Patrick’s hand then, and led him back to the station, both of them stopping every so often to giggle, and kiss, before jogging forward, afraid to miss their last chance at a free ride back home.

On the bus, there wasn’t enough seats so they stood. Being taller, David held the bar, and Patrick held on to David, and they kissed as they drove back home. No one around them seemed to notice much, or care. There was no one they knew. Their friends must have gotten another bus, or maybe were planning to Uber back, after last call.

Patrick didn’t care much where they were, and he was actually glad they weren’t there. Because he didn’t need to hear their shit right now. He didn’t need to be teased, or whistled at, or patted on the back. He didn’t need an audience. He only needed David.

Some people got off halfway to campus, and a seat freed itself. David sat down, and Patrick immediately straddled his lap, wrapping his arms around David’s shoulders, pulling him in for another kiss. He didn’t care that he was in a mini dress, or that it had gotten hiked up high on each thigh to the point where you could see his boxers poking out. He didn’t care about the fact that he and David were kissing messily and filthily in a public place. In fact, he liked it. He liked it a lot, actually. Because he wanted the world to know. He wanted to shout it from mountaintops: David is mine and Patrick was his!

They didn’t stand out too badly on the bus, anyways. There were several other couples making out, and the rest seemed too drunk to care. There was a girl that was ugly sobbing over catching her boyfriend hooking up with some other girl, there was a group loudly and drunkenly singing Queen songs, there was someone else, slumped forward with their head in a bag, a bedraggled and annoyed looking friend beside them, rubbing their back. People had their own shit going on. No one cared if Patrick straddled David obscenely and shoved his tongue down his throat.

Patrick wanted that bus ride to last forever.

But, eventually, they’d made it back to campus. Together, David and Patrick had walked, stopped to make out, and then walked some more, back to their room.

Patrick didn’t know what he was expecting. He hadn’t really thought it through, really. But there was something… strange… about returning back to the room they shared together, now that they’d opened the floodgates on their feelings (and physicality). Like… what now? This room, until now, had been a place of platonic cuddling, and sharing a bed full of unresolved sexual tension.

What would they do now that that tension was able to be… resolved? Suddenly, Patrick felt really
self conscious. They’d been sharing a fucking bed almost every night since they’d gotten back from Thanksgiving, and for most of the week before it, too. Patrick had gotten used to it, it had become a routine. To the point where it was almost hard to sleep, when David wasn’t right there next to him. But now it meant so much more...

They both froze in the doorway, and looked back and forth between the two beds, a little awkwardly. “Let’s get ready for bed.” David suggested, and things regained a little bit of normalcy after that, as they fell comfortably into their evening routine. They shared a sink stall to brush their teeth, catching eyes in the mirror and giggling, as usual. Upon seeing his reflection, Patrick was reminded that his face was covered in makeup (very smudged, slutty looking makeup, at the moment), and he decided to have a quick shower while David did his evening skin routine.

When Patrick was done, David was already back in their room, and when he returned, he found David in his bed. Patrick froze again, wondering what to do. He looked at David, and then back at his own bed. Would climbing into bed with him freak David out? It was honestly way too soon in their relationship to be sleeping together… and yet they’d been sleeping together, long before they’d ever kissed. Did kissing each other, did wanting more, change things?

Feeling unsure, Patrick turned to his own bed and pulled the covers back. But before he could even lie down, David stopped him. “Is it something I did?” He asked, causing Patrick to turn around, a little confused. But David didn’t look upset. He was smiling, a little shy, a little coy.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“You’re not sleeping with me?” David asked, pouting a little. And okay, fuck, Patrick wanted nothing more than to bite that lip and suck on it.

“I didn’t know if that was still okay…” He replied, honestly, and he hadn’t moved yet, so David patted the bed beside him.

“I sleep better with you.” Was all he said, and now it was Patrick’s turn to smile shyly.

“Same.” He said, and then pulled his t-shirt up and over his head, tossing it vaguely in the direction of his hamper. He missed by a good couple feet, but he could care less. He’d pick it up in the morning. Patrick slid into bed next to David, as he held the covers up, and snuggled in close.

It took about 3.5 seconds for them to be making out again. Except this time, they were horizontal.
In a bed. With complete privacy. And both of them were only wearing their boxers.

Things escalated very quickly.

Before long, Patrick was achingly hard, and so was David, and their hips seemed to move of their own accord as their hands roamed. It felt so fucking good, feeling David pressed up against him like that. His cock was big, and hard, and so masculine that Patrick thought he might melt. That feeling of rightness returned, and he knew this was it for him. He’d never go back to girls. There was nothing bi or pan about him. Patrick was gay. And if the only guy he ever got to be with was David Rose, that would be fine. Because he couldn’t imagine anyone, ever, being able to stand up to what he made him feel now.

It would have been so easy to let things go further. All Patrick would have to do was lower his hand from David’s chest down to cup him over his boxers. David would thrust into his hand, and it would be all downhill from there.

But Patrick didn’t want to hook up with David on the first night they kissed.

Okay, that was a lie. He really, really wanted to hook up with David. It’s just… he didn’t think he should. The voice in the back of his mind seemed to get louder and louder as they fell apart in each other’s arms, as Patrick felt the climb towards release start to build in his loins. It kept telling him that they had time. That he should be savouring this, enjoying it. One step at a time. There was no need to just cannonball in off the diving board. Instead, he could dip his toes in, and enjoy himself as he eased into… whatever this was. A relationship, he hoped.

So with a tremendous amount of willpower, Patrick pulled his lips away from David’s, he stilled his hips, and he laughed, leaning his forehead in against David’s. “Wow…” Was all he could say, and David chuckled, leaned forward to place an adorable kiss to the tip of Patrick’s nose, and then he replaced his forehead against Patrick’s.

“Yeah, wow…” David agreed, and Patrick chuckled again. Then he pulled back just enough so that he could look into David’s eyes.

“It’s not that I don’t want more, it’s just… I don’t want to rush…” Patrick tried to explain, but the words weren’t coming out right.

“It’s okay if you’re not ready. We can go as slow as you’d like.” David said, a slightly worried
expression passing over his features. Patrick shook his head. No, that wasn’t it.

“No, it’s not that I’m not ready. I’m ready right now.” Patrick replied, and David’s shy smile formed and twisted to the side of his face, his eyes sparkling before he dipped his head down.

“Oh…” He replied.

“Yeah…”

“So…”

“I just don’t want to blow past all our firsts. I want to, I don’t know what I’m trying to say. It’s not that I’m not ready. It’s just, I want to enjoy it all. Every step. I just want to--”

“Savour it?” David cut in, reading Patrick’s intent much better than he thought he’d been explaining it. Then David smiled and nodded. “Yeah, I want to too. Can we just make out a bit, and then go to sleep?” He asked, and Patrick’s answering smile was all he needed to say.

They made out for what felt like at least another hour, before their kisses started to become softer and more sleepy. Eventually, they pulled apart, feeling warm and content, and ready to fall asleep. Patrick lifted his arm a little, so David could snuggle in against him, and he lay on his back, looking up at the ceiling, just thinking about how goddamn lucky he was. How, just a few hours ago, he would have written this off as unadulterated fantasy, completely outside the realm of possibility.

He was just starting to drift off, when David startled him. “Oh, shit!” David said, and Patrick twisted his head to look down at him, concerned.

“What is it?”

“We can’t tell Stevie about us! Or anyone. But especially not Stevie.” David said, and now Patrick was even more concerned. Was David ashamed of him? Did he not want people to know? Patrick had sort of thought this was going somewhere special, that maybe David had wanted him to be his boyfriend… had he been reading all the signs wrong?
“What? Why not? They’ll be happy for us, they’ve been bugging me to ask you out for weeks.” Patrick asked, trying to keep the worry out of his tone. David groaned.

“Ugh, you too? They wouldn’t leave me alone about it. And, yes, okay. Maybe I can see now that they had a point.” He replied, and Patrick chuckled and leaned forward to kiss David. Why? Because he could. And that was all the reason he needed. When he pulled away, he answered him.

“What took us so long then?” He asked, and David shrugged and laid his head down onto Patrick’s shoulder.

“Because, I was convinced you only wanted to be friends, and I didn’t want to do anything to ruin that.”

“Okay, that’s literally exactly why I didn’t ask you out either.” Patrick replied, and David laughed. “So now that we’ve established we’re both idiots, can you tell me why we can’t let any of our friends know about us? Are you that ashamed of me already?” Patrick asked, teasing David and tickling his ribs a little as he asked that last question.

“What? No!” David replied, pulling back a little so Patrick could see the incredulous look on his face. “No. It’s nothing like that. It’s just… yesterday, when i was hanging out with Stevie, she was being super annoying about it…” David started to explain, but then he trailed off, sheepish.

“... And?” Patrick prompted, and David rolled his eyes, deciding to continue.

“And I was so sure you only wanted to be my friend, and that nothing was going to happen with us, that I may have made her a bet that you didn’t like me like that.” David explained quickly, and Patrick laughed.

“Ouch. You know she played you, right David? Because she knows exactly how much I like you. Like that.” He replied, and David rolled his eyes again.

“She’s the worst.” He agreed, and Patrick pulled David back down against him, soothing him as he patted his hair.

“How much did she get you for?”
“...fifty bucks.” David replied, a little shamefully, into the bare skin of Patrick’s shoulder where it met his neck. Patrick couldn’t help it, he knew they’d settled into a comfortable position, but he twisted around to look at David.

“Fifty bucks!? David you don’t have fifty bucks to spare.”

“Yeah, I know that! Which is why we can’t tell Stevie. Not until we can dig up some dirt to use as leverage against her, so she won’t want to collect on the bet.” David explained, a little too casually for someone planning on finding a way to blackmail their best friend.

“That doesn’t really sound like something a friend would do, David…” Patrick replied, a little hesitantly.

“Do you doubt for a single second that, were the situations reversed, she wouldn’t do the exact same thing?” David asked him back, seriously. Patrick thought about Stevie, and the answer to David’s question.

“No, nope. She’d do the exact same thing.” He agreed with certainty a moment later. David smiled smugly.

“So you agree not to tell them? Just until we can figure something out…” David asked, hopefully.

“Just until we can get some leverage on Stevie. Which better be fast.” Patrick agreed, and David settled back in against his shoulder once more.

“Our only problem is going to be Stevie’s complete lack of shame. I’m not sure she’ll have much dirt that she wouldn’t share with strangers willingly.” David mused, and turned his head to give Patrick’s wandering fingers better access to his scalp.

Patrick lost himself for a few minutes, as he patted and scratched David’s hair, intoxicated in the way his signature scent filled his nostrils and his senses. But eventually, a thought floated forward in his tired, still a little drunk mind. He laughed at the thought. “I can’t believe you bet Stevie fifty bucks that we would never get together.” He said. And he couldn’t. Because it was so ridiculous, to think that David had been feeling the exact way he had been. That they’d wasted so much time! He tried not to think about that part.
“Yeah, well, I thought it was a pretty safe bet.” David replied, a little sadly.

“Yeah, well, you were very wrong about that.” Patrick replied, and felt as David smiled and placed a kiss to the skin over his collar bone.

“Mmm, well I can tell you with full certainty, that I’ve never been so happy to be wrong in my entire life.” He sounded sleepy. Patrick was sleepy, too. They needed to go to sleep. A moment or two passed, and Patrick felt that heavy pull to unconsciousness, but he couldn’t help himself. So, with his final bit of energy available to him, he teased David. Because, what else was he supposed to do? David was too easy to tease.

“You know, David.” He said, his voice thick and rough. “Mm?” David replied, obviously starting to drift. But he’d replied, so Patrick continued. “If we get that fifty bucks back from Stevie, I just hope you know you’re taking me out on a nice date.” He said, and felt David let out a breath against his skin, a sleepy little laugh, and then placed a kiss.

“Mmhmm.” He replied, with a tiny nod of his head.

And with that, they both fell into a deep and wonderfully restful sleep, in each others arms.

And Patrick didn’t dream. Because what dream could be better than the reality he was going to get to wake up to, in the morning?

Chapter End Notes

Slow burns, amirite!? I can't believe we finally got there! I hope it was worth the wait!


Please, if you have the time, let me know what you thought in the comments. They are
immesurably inspirational!
Ch. 1: Can David and Patrick really hope to keep their newly-romantic relationship a secret? They've got to, unless they lose their bet to Stevie. And David really don't have $50 to lose.

PART 1 of 2

Ch. 2: As Patrick slowly awoke beside David the next morning, one of his first thoughts was of the run he was supposed to go on, and how there was no way that was happening now. In fact, it was probably going to be a lot harder to get anything done from then on, because he didn’t think he’d ever want to do anything other than kiss or cuddle again, now that he and David were… God, he could barely even think it. It still felt like a fantasy, a dream that he would wake up from at any moment. In one night, one amazing night, everything had changed. Patrick was the happiest he’d ever been, and it just didn’t feel real.

But David’s body felt real, lying next to him. Wrapped around him. All solid, and warm. Patrick’s arm wrapped around him, holding him close as David dozed against his chest, and Patrick’s hand slowly moved up and down the muscular expanse of David’s back. Just reveling in the feeling of his bare skin against his palm.
It didn’t seem real. None of this seemed real. And yet, Patrick was pretty sure that it was.

On impulse, he pulled David in closer, squeezing him, and he bent to place a kiss to the top of his head. Because, he could do that now. At least, he was pretty sure he could. He supposed there was a chance that David would wake up and regret everything and want to go back to just being friends, or worse…

David murmured adorably and nuzzled in, trying to block the light from his eyes and fall back asleep, but Patrick’s blood had gone cold at the thought he’d just had, and suddenly, he really needed David to be awake. What Patrick wanted to do was shake him into consciousness and beg him to kiss him and reassure him that their feelings were real, and that he wasn’t going to cut Patrick off. That he still wanted more.

But he couldn’t do that, it would be ridiculous, desperate. “Not a good look,” as David would say. So Patrick dug deep, and mustered up a manufactured sense of calm. He still needed to wake David up, he needed that reassurance right now maybe even more than he needed air. But, he was determined to be cool about it.

“Hey, hey sleepyhead.” Patrick said, hoping his voice was coming out soft and sweet, and not breathless and anxious. David made a protesting ‘mmnnnyyuhhh’ sound, which made Patrick smile. He shook him gently, leaning away a little so he could see him, and to slowly remove David’s shoulder-pillow from the equation. He wanted David awake, but he wanted to ease him into it. He hoped he’d succeeded. “Hey, you awake?” He whispered, and smiled as David looked up at him, his eyes still mostly closed, and that crooked little smile bloomed on his face.

“I am now. Is it late? Did we miss breakfast?” David asked, still a little dazed. Patrick’s stomach was roiling, as he looked at his --boyfriend? friend? roommate?-- he felt torn between extreme attraction and affection, and extreme anxiety. David was so fucking adorable, especially right when he woke up. Patrick just wanted to lean forward and kiss him, but he didn’t know if David would still want that, after sleeping on it for a night and sobering up in the process.

Patrick shook his head. “No, it’s still pretty early.” He answered, softly, his eyes roaming over David’s face. His morning stubble, his slightly pouty lips, his long dark lashes, his thick eyebrows turned unruly after sleep. He looked at him, and he knew he loved him. He loved David Rose. He knew it was fast, but knew with every molecule in his body that it was true. He smiled sadly at the melancholy happiness that knowledge seemed to evoke in himself. Because how could he be truly happy about being so deeply, madly, dangerously in love with someone else, when the risk they didn’t feel the same way still existed?

David must have noticed Patrick’s expression shift. “Are you okay?” He twisted a little to see the display on his alarm clock. “It’s not even 9, why are you awake? I have the alarm set for 10:30 so
we don’t miss breakfast.” David seemed to be searching Patrick’s face now as well, his own worried expression mirroring Patrick’s. Patrick shook his head a little.

“I’m sorry. I was awake, and I started thinking, and I wanted—I needed…” He trailed off, not coming across as ‘cool’ at all, not knowing how to phrase what he’d been feeling. But he’d started talking, and David was looking at him, all expectant and worried, so Patrick had to continue. He swallowed. “I just needed to make sure you hadn’t changed your mind.” He finished, and looked to David for a response. He saw the corner of David’s lip twitch, but then his mouth twisted to the side to cover the smile that started to bloom.

“So about that intramural innertube waterpolo team? The answer is still a hard no, Patrick. You know what chlorine does to my hair.” David replied, and Patrick huffed out a sort of laugh/sigh hybrid and rolled his eyes.

“Not what I was talking about David.” He said, and that smile David was trying to hold back broke free a little. “What I meant was—”

“Of course I didn’t change my mind, Patrick. What, did you think that I’m some sort of hussy that only hooked up with you because I was drunk? Actually, don’t answer that.” David cut in, and Patrick smiled and shook his head at how ridiculous David was sometimes, relief washing over him in waves. “No, Patrick, last night, I mean, I hope… I don’t have much experience with this sort of thing, and I don’t really know what a relationship looks like, unless you count my parents, and I am not counting my parents. But I’ve never really had a b— I mean, I’ve never… this is all new to me. I don’t know what I’m doing here, Patrick.” David said plaintively, spiraling into anxiety a little as the words fell out of him, and Patrick smiled and reached forward to cup David’s cheek with his palm and calm him.

“Hey, hey.” Patrick said, like someone talking to a skittish horse, holding David’s eye contact, waiting for recognition to return. “This is all new to me too, remember? I’ve never had a boyfriend either.” Patrick said, letting the last words go cautiously, waiting nervously for a reaction. They, of course, hadn’t talked about whether they were boyfriends, and for most people it would be incredibly early for that sort of thing. But he thought, just now, that David had almost said the word. And frankly, Patrick was dying to find out if they were on the same page about this, so he let it slip as a calculated risk. He held his breath, but didn’t have to wait long before David melted into his hand, pressing his cheek against Patrick’s palm and then placing a kiss on his wrist. He hadn’t spoken yet, but another wave of relief washed over Patrick.

“Is that what you want?” David asked, shyly, and Patrick smiled.

“Is what what I want?” Patrick asked, teasing David, making him say the word. Meanwhile, his heart soared higher than a Turkey Vulture over Ouimet Canyon. David bobbed his head back and
forth, as if he was working up to it.

“You know… being… boyfriends?” He asked, and Patrick smiled and took his hand from David’s cheek and ran it up and down David’s arm.

“Is that what you want, David?” He asked, and this earned him an eyeroll, which only made Patrick smile more.

“I asked you first.” David almost whined.

“Then yes.” Patrick replied.

“Yes what?” David insisted. Patrick chuckled.

“Yes, I want to be your boyfriend David.” He replied, as clearly and unmistakably as he could. David’s eyes went wide with shock, and he swallowed.

“Oh.”

“Yeah.”

“Okay.” David seemed in a daze, and Patrick smiled indulgently, and playfully and lightly shoved David’s shoulder.

“Is that what you want too?” He asked, and was yet again graced with a classic David eyeroll.

“Obviously.” Was all he said, and okay then. Inside, Patrick was exploding with relief and excitement and lust and love and every good feeling all boiled down and concentrated into one ultimate feeling of joy. Outside, Patrick was also in a bit of a daze. He bit his lips, and nodded curtly.

“Well, good then.” He said, still trying desperately to control the feelings inside that made him feel ready to burst at any second. David wanted to be his boyfriend! Was this definitely real? Not
feeling willing to trust something this good, Patrick lifted his free hand off of David and above his head, so he could bend his other trapped arm to pinch his wrist. It hurt. This was real. Somehow, this was real. He literally couldn’t believe this was happening, and yet it was.

“So, does that mean-- are we… boyfriends, now?” David asked, still tripping up a little on the ‘B’ word. He was smiling so hopefully that Patrick’s heart swelled almost painfully.

“I think one of us has to officially ask the other, first.” He replied, and David nodded.

“Okay, yeah.” He agreed. “Ask me.” He added, a direct request, and he looked into Patrick’s eyes expectantly, his own eyes shining with happiness, excitement, and still a little bit of sleep.

“What? Why do I have to ask you? Why can’t you ask me?” Patrick argued, both to tease David and get a reaction (his favourite game), but also a little because, well… Patrick had never been asked out before. Especially not by a gorgeous guy that he’d been hardcore crushing on (okay, in love with). In the end he knew it didn’t matter, that they’d be together just the same, but silly arguments with David came as natural to Patrick as breathing these days. And why shouldn’t he be the one asked out?

David just stared at him, deadpan, and shook his head a little, like it was the most obvious answer in the world. “Because I called it.”

“You called it.” Patrick said the words as a statement, but it was also a question. He quirked one eyebrow at David, and tried to bite back his smile.

“Yes, I asked first.” David agreed, nodding and pursing his lips. It looked like he was also trying to hold back a smile.

“So you asked to be asked out first. That’s your argument?” Patrick clarified.

“Do I need a better one? Yes.” He replied haughtily, and tilted his chin up, although the move lost some of its effect due to them being currently horizontal on a bed, limbs intertwined. “I’m waiting, Patrick.” David added, and okay, Patrick couldn’t help it, he let out a laugh.

“Okay, fine. You’re such a brat, you know that David?” Patrick replied, laughing, and reaching up
to cup David’s cheek and brush his thumb over his cheekbone to take the sting out of the words. He looked deep into David’s eyes, and tried to ignore the swarm of butterflies in his chest. He didn’t know why he was suddenly nervous. David was obviously going to say yes. And yet, this might be the most important question Patrick had ever asked in his entire life, so how could he not be nervous? He swallowed, and braced himself to continue. “David, will you be my--”

“YES!” David interrupted, loudly, that one word heavy with emotion. And with that one word, Patrick felt like he was punched in the gut. But in a good way, if that makes sense. It just hit him like a battering ram, the reality of what David saying yes meant to him. And he wanted to cry. But also, he realized, he’d never actually gotten to ask the question!

“You didn’t let me finish!” He protested, and David just smiled and shook his head.

“Shut up, Patrick.” He replied, and then leaned forward and connected their lips. And then all the argument left Patrick and they were kissing. Kissing in a way Patrick had never experienced before, not with Rachel, not even with David the previous night. Because now they were sober, and they were actually together, and there was just so much emotion and passion packed into this one kiss, Patrick thought he might burst.

Things quickly heated up, and before long arms were raking up and down bodies, hair was being tugged, legs were wrapping around legs, hooking each other closer. Their tongues searched and probed, soft (and not so soft) moans escaping their connected lips. After a while, both of their hips started bucking, and their breathing became hitched, erratic as things began to spiral.

In the back of Patrick’s mind, he heard the voice telling him that he should probably slow down. That he’d told David he’d like to go slow, and he should stick to it. And yet in the moment, that idea didn’t make one single bit of sense, so he ignored it out of hand. Because nothing seemed more important to his lust-drunk mind in that moment than going down whatever path he and David were presently on, and following it to the end. He couldn’t remember ever feeling so good!

KNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCK

There was a rapid banging on their door. “Fuck!” David whispered, pulling back from his lips and twisting to look up at the door like it might open wide at any second. And actually, they’d been pretty drunk the night before, had they remembered to lock it? Patrick twisted around, away from David, so he could see. Yes. Thank God.

“Who is that?” Patrick whispered, honestly pretty pissed off, and ready to give it to whoever was on the other side of that door, whoever’d had the nerve to interrupt what he considered a very
important private meeting between two freshly minted boyfriends.

“Open up!” Said the voice loudly, banging a few more times on the door. It was Stevie. Of course it was Stevie.

“You can’t let her know about us!” David whisper-screamed at Patrick as he shoved him bodily out of his bed. When Patrick stood up, he grabbed a t-shirt and threw it over his head, then looked at David, his eyes asking ‘how do I look?’. “Jesus Christ, you look thoroughly fucked. Wipe your face, and maybe don’t let her see the tent in your shorts?” David whispered, and Patrick turned to check himself out in the mirror. Yep, David was right. He looked thoroughly fucked. He hoped that didn’t mean David was thoroughly fucked now too, when it came to his $50 bet with Stevie.

“One second!” Patrick called out to Stevie.

“What the fuck Stevie, I’m trying to sleep here!” David called out after him.

“Oh, is that what you’re trying to do?” Stevie asked back, skepticism dripping off every word. “Come on, what’s taking so long?”

“I’m just looking for some pants.” Patrick said, stalling for time. He looked at his bed, then on impulse, he punched in the pillow and messed up the sheets a little more, trying to make it look like he’d actually slept there the previous night. Finally, not thinking he could stall for any longer, he took a big breath and turned towards the door. He flipped the lock and opened the door a crack and stuck his head through. “I couldn’t find my pants.” He said, trying to explain why he was only cracking the door and peeking through, hoping she’d buy it. “What’s up?”

“It’s only Nine-fucking-thirty and we got in at like 2, Stevie. This better be good.” David groaned from his bed, putting on a voice like he’d just been woken up. Patrick noted that he was actually a pretty good actor, and thought that if he was Stevie, he might have actually believed him.

Stevie didn’t reply right away, she just shoved her way past Patrick and into their room. Patrick hadn’t been expecting it, so he hadn’t stopped her, and suddenly he was really glad he’d taken the time to mess up his bed. “You can cut the act, I heard you guys hooked up last night.” She said, turning on her heel and looking at first David, and then Patrick. Scrutinizing their reactions. Patrick mustered up every bit of control he had, and tried to force a bewildered, amused expression onto his face.
“That’s ridiculous.” David replied, rolling his eyes and seeming annoyed. “ *This* is what you woke me up for? You can come back during business hours, if you have any other fairy tales you want to regale me with, Stevie.” David said, and Patrick had to force himself not to look impressed. But he was. That was pretty good! Patrick looked back to Stevie, and saw her assurance falter just a hair.

“That’s bullshit.” She declared, but she didn’t say it with conviction, and Patrick got suspicious as to the solidity of her proof.

“Who told you that? We left the Trash after I puked, and I’m pretty sure I passed out on David’s shoulder on the ride back.” Patrick said, trying his hand at lying as well. And he must have been okay at it, because Stevie’s determination seemed to falter once again.

“Jenny’s friend Karen from Ottonabee told her she saw two guys making out on the bus, and one of them was wearing a *dress.*” She replied, glaring at the two of them, like that *had* to be them. Except, as far as evidence went? It was pretty flimsy, and it seemed like Stevie knew it.

“Okay seriously Stevie? That’s weak and you know it. So can you, and Jenny, and *Karen* kindly please fuck off? I have exactly 57 minutes before this alarm will go off and I intend to sleep for at least 56 of them.” David said, and in such a way that anyone but Stevie Budd would have probably left. But she just squinted at him.

“Why are your lips puffy?” She asked David, and Patrick couldn’t help himself from lifting his hand to wipe at his own mouth, guiltily. Luckily though, she was turned the other way and didn’t see. Suddenly scared she’d turn on Patrick next, he grabbed David’s fluffy black robe off the hook on the wall, and wrapped it around himself, effectively hiding any remaining evidence of his now softening erection.

“They’re probably puffy like my *eyes* are going to be, if I don’t get some fucking sleep, Stevie.” David replied, bitingly. Suddenly, Stevie whirled around and stalked the couple steps over to Patrick’s bed, where she leaned down and put her palm on the center.

“Why is your bed cold?” Stevie asked Patrick, who knew he probably looked a little like a deer in headlights, so he did his best to twist his face into his best ‘what the fuck is wrong with you’ look.

“I’ve been reading, I don’t need as much beauty sleep as David.” Patrick said, in what he hoped was a very nonchalant way. “Is this about the bet you guys made? David told me about it. You’re not going to keep doing this every day until Christmas break, are you Stevie? Come on, you know we’re just friends. You guys should just call the bet off.” He added, knowing she would never, and right on cue, she rolled her eyes.
“Okay, fine. Don’t tell me. But you fuckers aren’t going to be able to hide this forever. And when I
find out about it, you better believe I’m collecting my fifty bucks.” She said, turning halfway
through, so she could look at both of them in the eyes. When she was finished giving them her best
death stare, she walked to the door, opened it, and then paused in the doorway, turning back. “And
you know I’d be happy about more than just the fifty bucks, right? You two idiots deserve each
other, so hurry up about it.” She said, and then turned and left, letting the heavy door swing shut
with a loud thud behind her.

Silence fell on the room, and Patrick turned to David. “Do you think she bought it?” He asked.

“It doesn’t matter if she bought it, she can’t prove it. We’re going to have to be really careful, when
we’re around her, or anyone she knows.” David replied, and Patrick nodded.

“Yeah.” He agreed. He didn’t love the idea of lying to their friends or hiding his relationship with
David, because he wasn’t ashamed of it. The opposite, really. He wanted people to know. But on
the other hand, the idea of sneaking around, of secret touches and stolen kisses? That sounded kind
of hot, to Patrick at least. He wouldn’t want to do it for long, but he thought he might be able to last
until Christmas. He looked at David. “Are you really going back to sleep?” He asked, and David
smiled and rolled his eyes.

“Get over here, dumbass.” He replied, and Patrick was disrobed and back in bed, making out with
him in 3 seconds flat.

They’d been making out for a while, when David felt the lighter, more reflexive movement of
Patrick’s hips moving, pushing his cock against his own, becoming more purposeful. He was of
course desperate to buck his own hips back against his --God, he could barely even think it!--
Boyfriend’s, but he’d been holding back, because Patrick had requested they go slow. He’d wanted
to enjoy each step. And Patrick had stopped them before they’d been able to grind until, err,
completion, the previous night. Ergo, David assumed they weren’t on that step yet.

So he’d been good. Patrick, on the other hand, seemed determined to break his own rule in less
time than it took Britney’s Vegas marriage to be annulled. He was a fiend, and David was very
okay with that. And he would be very okay to grind back, to really put on the moves until Patrick
cried out his name and begged for more. He wanted to worship Patrick’s body the way it deserved
to be. Except Patrick had asked him not to. Well, sort of. He’d said he needed time, so... same
He was obviously currently forgetting that he’d asked for more time, which was causing a bit of a problem for David and his already somewhat faulty moral compass. Because he didn’t forget. And he really wanted more right now, and it seemed like Patrick was willing to give it. And God was he sexy. He seemed ravenous, like he wanted to devour David, and David was only too happy to offer himself up. Patrick was very vocal, too, liberal with these hot little grunts and moans as his tongue explored David’s mouth, and his hips rolled against his own. But--

“Hey, hey--” David tried to pull away, tried to stop them, but Patrick didn’t want to stop. He chased his mouth, reaching for his head to hold him in place. Regretfully, half-wondering what the fuck he was doing, David dodged Patrick’s greedy mouth. “Wait, Patrick--” He said breathily, and laughed as he watched the dazed, half-drunk look clear from Patrick’s eyes. He was looking at David questioningly, so he explained. “You said you wanted to wait.”

“That sounds like the ravings of a drunken lunatic.” Patrick replied, trying to move in for another kiss, and David huffed a laugh and play-shoved him, though it was hard because they were so close, lying facing each other on their sides, legs entwined. Patrick smiled and rolled his eyes. “Okay, fine, thank you David. I guess that was escalating a little quickly.” He admitted.

“Mm, yeah, well, I guess I can’t blame you, I am pretty irresistible.” David agreed, pressing his lips together in an attempt to hold back his smile. He was pretty sure it showed, anyways.

“Ah, yes. And modest!” Patrick teased, and pushed him again. Then he leaned forward and placed a sweet, short little kiss on his lips.

“Mm, I like kissing you.” David said, saying the words without really thinking. He was too dazed from the kiss, as short and chaste as it was. Patrick smiled.

“If it wasn’t already obvious, I really like kissing you too, David.” David smiled.

“We can do this, just kiss, for as long as you need. I mean it, I really like it.” David said, hoping Patrick heard the earnest honesty in his words. He would wait for Patrick, he would. Patrick was worth waiting for. Patrick sighed.

“It’s not that I need time. I-- I don’t know how to explain this…” Patrick hesitated, looking like he was organizing his thoughts before continuing. David waited. Eventually, Patrick seemed able to
continue. “It’s just that I want time. I want you, David, trust me, I want you, but I want time first, too, but I don’t need it—” Patrick squeezed his eyes closed. “This isn’t making any sense.” Sensing his annoyance, David reached out and placed a hand on his shoulder, rubbing back and forth over the skin with his thumb.

“It doesn’t have to make sense. If you can’t explain it to me, or you don’t want to, it’s okay. I can wait. We’re going at your pace here.” David tried to reassure him. Patrick laughed once.

“You’re the one who stopped us, you saw what pace I want to go at.” He said, lifting his hand to rub at his face. David crinkled his eyebrows.

“Okay maybe I do want it to make sense then, if you want to go at a faster pace, can you explain why we’re waiting? Not that I mind. Just… help me understand.” David asked, careful to use a patient tone. He didn’t want Patrick to feel bad, but he was confused.

“It’s hard to explain. But-- okay I’m gonna say her name, can you handle that?” Patrick asked suddenly, looking at David for permission. He nodded once, tightly, and braced himself. “But I was with Rachel for a long time, a bit longer than three years. With her everything was different than with us… like… the opposite, almost. The only thing that was the same was we got along well, we teased each other well, she was funny, she laughed at my jokes…”

David nodded but he’d gone a little stiff, and Patrick must have noticed. He reached forward and rubbed his hand up and down David’s arm, bracing him, before continuing. “But a lot was different. We didn’t fit together, like, our bodies? Like you and me. How we tend to just… find each other, and always find the most comfortable positions so naturally. I could cuddle with you all day, I just always want to be touching you and it feels so right. But with her? It never felt right. If she sat on my lap it was awkward. We could never find a comfortable position together. We just didn’t fit. But we kept trying anyways, because on paper we were the perfect couple, and she liked me so much, and I figured I’d never do better, and-- I promise this is going somewhere.” Patrick suddenly cut in.

“Take your time, I like listening to you talk.” David replied, completely honestly. Patrick smiled in return at this, and leaned forward to press a short, chaste kiss to David’s lips. David’s eyes closed, and he smiled in contentment as he received his kiss. When he opened them, Patrick was looking at him, with wide adoring eyes. It was almost too much for David, he wanted to look away, or to cover Patrick’s eyes. How could anyone look at David in such a way? His insides were nothing but a fluttering, squirming mess. But as uncomfortable as he was, he also liked it.

“The point of all this is, nothing ever felt right with her. I didn’t know why at the time, I didn’t know why until I got here, actually. And met you.” He said, and he poked his finger into David’s chest in time with the word ‘you’, never breaking the way he was staring straight into David’s
soul. David bit his lips between his teeth, both uncomfortable and very, very pleased.

“I had my first kiss when I was sixteen, and it was the biggest let down of my life. I’d expected, I dunno… fireworks, or something? Instead it was just… nothing. Not bad really, I had just been expecting more. When it didn’t happen, I told myself more didn’t really exist, outside of love songs and romantic movies or novels. And I’d believed that, I’d lowered my expectations. That is, until last night—” Patrick’s gaze was heated and intense, and knocked the air right out of David. Before he even knew what was happening, Patrick’s hand was wrapping around David’s neck and pulling him to a deep, hot, passionate kiss.

David had managed a surprised ‘oh’ before their lips had met, but then it was all red hot passion, and he melted into Patrick, his lips pliant and dancing to the rhythm and tempo Patrick’s were setting for him. He softly moaned in contentment, and felt Patrick smile against him, and then pull back. David tried to chase him for a second, before he smiled himself and laid his head back down on the pillow. “Mmm.” He said, not able to stop himself.

Patrick chuckled. “Yeah… see? That’s what it’s supposed to feel like. That feels right. My first kiss was technically three years ago, David. But it really doesn’t feel like it happened until just last night. With you, it felt like my first time. The way a first time is supposed to be.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah.”

“Well, you know—” David started, but Patrick laughed and put his hand on David’s chest to stop him.

“Can I just, I promise this is still going somewhere.” He said, and when it was clear David was waiting for him to continue, he did. “So I might not have known it for a day or two after, but I’ve wanted to kiss you since the moment I met you, David. I waited all that time, all that anticipation… and it didn’t let me down. Kissing you, it’s the most amazing payoff to all that waiting, I can’t even begin—”

“Mm, yeah, I am pretty amazing…” David agreed, and Patrick laughed and lightly pawed at his chest.

“No arguments here.” He replied. “But I guess what I’m getting at, is I waited so long to kiss you,
and it ended up being the single most amazing experience of my life. And I was thinking, maybe we don’t need to just blow past that so quickly. And maybe there’s something to be said about a bit of anticipation…”

“I’m listening…” David replied.

“It’s just, the problem is after this morning, I’m not sure I’m going to have the willpower to hold out.” Patrick said, and honestly? David agreed. Patrick’s willpower was clearly terrible when it came to sex, so if they were going to be ‘waiting’, everything was obviously going to end up riding solely on David’s shoulders. Fine. He honestly would probably deserve a humanitarian award, by the end of this, for holding back when it would be so easy to tempt Patrick into breaking his rules. Because he was going to do it, he was going to hold back. For Patrick. What was he about to get himself into?

“Don’t worry, I’ll keep you on the straight and narrow.” David replied, and then considered his words. “Well, I’ll keep you on the narrow. I don’t know about the straight part…”

“There is definitely nothing straight about me, I’ve found.” Patrick agreed, chuckling.

“So how will you know? When am I allowed to let you talk me into second base, if I’m going to have to be your dick’s chaperone and gatekeeper.”

Patrick laughed. “I haven’t really thought that far. I wasn’t exactly expecting this to happen last night…” He replied a little shyly, and David smiled.

“Thank you Mr. Diggory.” David said, agreeing. “Okay, but seriously. How much time is enough time to enjoy what we’re doing, and to look forward to… what’s next?”

“Hands.” Patrick answered, very quickly, like he’d been thinking about this a lot already.

“Hands?” David clarified.

“I want to touch you… want you to touch me.” Patrick said, and his voice shuttered a little, like his breathing was shaky just at the thought of it. David swallowed. Holding back was going to be hard. Fuck, Patrick was a quivering mess just saying the words. Thinking of the ways he could make him fall apart, just using his hands, David had to swallow again, and felt his newly re-hardened
dick twitch with greedy interest.

“When? This weekend? Next weekend?” David asked, not really thinking about the absurd fact that he was apparently scheduling his next sex act with Patrick, a week or two in advance.

“This weekend.” Patrick replied, too quickly. And, okay, as much as that was the answer that David was wanting to hear, he got the distinct impression that Patrick’s dick had been the one to answer him, and not his brain.

“Okay, two weeks it is.” David replied, and Patrick groaned and pouted like a little kid, causing David to smile. “Not even, actually. 12 days. Friday of next week.” David clarified, but Patrick continued to pout.

“Fine.” He huffed, causing David to laugh. “Next Friday it is.” He agreed, brightening a little.

“I feel like we should shake on this.” David remarked. “This feels very businesslike.” Patrick smiled.

“I’ll have the paperwork on your desk first thing Monday morning.” Patrick replied, and David laughed. Then David shifted his energy, and smirked at Patrick, running his finger slowly and suggestively down his bare chest, pausing just below his belly button, before heading back up to circle one nipple, and then the other. Patrick closed his eyes and his head fell back a little, and he sucked in a breath.

“So, Brewer, you think you’re gonna make it?” David teased, and Patrick was rolling his eyes, laughing, and shaking his head all at once.

“No, nope, no way.” He replied, and David scoffed, but he felt his cheeks ache a little from withholding his smile, and knew knew he was doing a terrible job.

“This is all going to come down to me, isn’t it?” David sighed, and Patrick smiled fondly.

“I can promise I’ll try?” He offered, and fuck, why was he so Goddamned cute? David rolled his eyes yet again, and leaned forward to kiss him. And that’s what they did for the next fifteen or so minutes, just languidly kissed one another, their hands moving slowly and possessively over everything except one very important place, until David’s final breakfast alarm interrupted them.
Because as important and enjoyable as making out alone in their shared room was, missing final call for free breakfast had to take precedence.

Breakfast was painful, trying not to be too obvious about the newly changed status of his and David’s relationship, and Patrick wondered if it was this bad already, how the hell were they going to make it until Christmas? Knowing he would never make it, he resolved himself to trying to figure out some way out of the bet. He wondered for probably the tenth time whether he wouldn’t be able to just talk to Stevie, like a heart to heart, and to ask her to call it off? But after this morning, he thought that was pretty unlikely.

When they’d arrived in the cafeteria, they’d collected their rubbery pancakes (they’d stopped making them fresh about 20 minutes earlier), bacon (that was still perfectly delicious), a little white bowl with fruit salad, and they dispensed themselves some from-concentrate juice into their tiny clear plastic juice cups. When they were loaded up, they headed out to find whatever friends they could that happened to be down for breakfast. What they weren’t expecting was all their friends. And more.

A ton of people were crowding around a long table, talking animatedly, and Patrick got the weirdest feeling about it… “What the fuck?” David said from beside him, taking the words out of his mouth. The weird feeling in Patrick’s stomach didn’t get any better when they got closer and everyone turned to look at them all at once. For a second, he wondered if he should just go sit at another table and pretend like whatever the hell this was wasn’t happening. But then he saw Stevie. Right in the middle of everyone. And his brows narrowed.

“Hey guys, how’s it goin’?” He asked, mock-brightly, and several of the people who had been staring seemed to realize it, and they looked away guiltily.

“Patrick! David! So nice of you to join us.” Stevie said, and was that a somewhat diabolical edge to her voice? Several people waved or muttered ‘hey’ or ‘later’ and vacated the table, leaving the usual crew of Stevie, Twyla, Ted, Miguel, and a few others they hung out with here and there. Slowly, Patrick lowered himself into a seat on the side of the table closest to him, and laid his tray on the surface.

“Hey David, there’s a chair open right next to Patrick, have a seat!” Said Sarah, a girl from down the hall that hung out with Stevie and Twyla mostly, a bit too brightly and unnatural. Patrick narrowed his eyes suspiciously. Had Stevie enlisted the help of the entire dorm to spy on them for
her? But Stevie was *right* there, she could see them and annoy them herself. It didn’t make any sense.

David walked around to the other side of the table and sat opposite Patrick. “I’m good here.” He replied breezily.

There was a weirdly tense silence at the table for a moment, before Twyla smiled and chimed in. “So did you guys have fun last night?” And Patrick could tell there was no ulterior motive behind her question, just a bright and eager hope that they’d had fun. He smiled and sighed, relieved, and silently thanked Twyla and her sweet, kind heart.

“Yeah, Twy, the Trash was packed. How was the Vibe?” He asked, and normalcy returned to the table for just a little while.

“They’re playing footsie!” Stevie shouted, a little while later. David was finishing his rubber pancakes slowly, because they were honestly awful, but it would be very off-brand of David not to finish his plate, so he stolidly pressed on. Patrick had hooked his foot around David’s ankle, and had been slowly brushing the toe of his shoe up and down the back of his calf. David glared at Stevie, who had shoved her head under the table, and had now emerged, looking victorious. David rolled his eyes, unimpressed with her “proof”.

“We literally *always* play footsies.” David drawled, before shoving another awful bite of pancake into his mouth. Patrick had already abandoned his, having only taken a few bites. He’d finished his bacon and fruit salad, though, much to David’s chagrin, as he’d love another piece right then.

“It’s true, Stevie, they do.” Ted agreed, taking David and Patrick’s side, and David made a mental note to be a little nicer to him for the next little while. Ted was a super nice guy, but that wasn’t the problem. It was all the cringey puns and unflinching optimism that sometimes got a little under David’s skin. But ultimately, they were friends, and David was currently very grateful he was there.

“So do all of you guys know about the bet too, then?” Patrick asked from across the table. David was very pleased to note he hadn’t moved his foot, even after Stevie had outed them to the whole group.

“I have eyes everywhere, Patrick. You might as well just give up now.” Stevie replied. “Or any
time, like, say, next Tuesday. Really whenever, but you’d be smart to do it soon. Save yourself all the running around and hiding. It’s only fifty bucks.” She replied, and David scoffed and shook his head, taking another bite.

“The only thing I’m hiding is my bacon from David tomorrow morning, he took half of it and the line was already closed.” Patrick replied, and David smiled before pasting a scandalized look on his face.

“Excuse me, I was hungry, and you looked like you didn’t want all of it.” He defended himself, and Patrick laughed.

“Oh and what, David, is the ‘I don’t want all of my bacon’ look that I was exuding? Because I want to be sure not to look that way tomorrow morning.” He replied, dryly, but as he spoke, his foot slowly ran up the back of David’s leg, and then back down again.

“Ow.” Patrick said, laughing, as he reached to grab the back of his head with his hand. He’d bumped it on what was probably a hook, and David giggled, both of them giddy and full of adrenaline and lust. They’d ducked away from their friends for a moment, because it was becoming clear that Patrick wasn’t going to be able to keep his hands off of David if they didn’t. They’d been hanging out in the common room, and David had been leaning against Patrick, as usual.

They’d both decided that if they stopped the touching and cuddling in front of their friends it would be just as obvious to everyone that something was up with them, than if they decided to just make out in front of them. So they were playing this very precarious balancing game, of touching, but not too much. Being sweet and cute, but not too sweet and cute. It hadn’t even been a day, and it was already exhausting.

David had excused himself to go to the bathroom, and Patrick followed not long after, claiming to want to grab a bottle of water from the snackbar. The second they’d been out of view, Patrick had pinned David to the wall, sucking in a sharp breath before pressing his lips hungrily against David’s, deepening the kiss immediately, moaning into his mouth. His hands were pressed into David’s shoulders, holding him there, and his fingers curled into his skin, probably leaving little crescent shapes where his nails dug in.

David melted into the kiss at first, but soon after he’d begun to stiffen, and then he pulled away to
look down the hall, to make sure they weren’t caught. It was a good thing, too, because they really weren’t far away from where the group were hanging out, and Stevie was like a bloodhound right now. He was actually a little surprised she hadn’t come running the second they’d started to kiss, having smelled it in the air or something.

It was becoming very clear that Patrick was not going to be good at hiding. He was too reckless and impulsive, when it came to David. Which was weird, because those were two words that normally wouldn’t even make a top 20 list of adjectives to describe Patrick Brewer. He didn’t know what it was really, it had been less than 24 hours, but he was already addicted to David. He couldn’t get enough. It would be hard enough, lasting until next Friday to move to second base, and that was only 2 weeks. Could he really refrain from kissing David in public for 2 whole months?

Patrick had already started wracking his brain for ideas on how to earn a quick $50, to pay David back if he lost him the bet. The only thing stopping him from doing just that, was this strange impulse to stick it to Stevie, not to let her win like that. Because frankly, as much as Patrick loved her, Stevie could be a little shit disturber sometimes. He knew she was or would be happier for them than anyone, because she truly cared about them and wanted them to be happy. So why did she have to pull these stupid stunts with David? The two of them were like siblings, the way they needled and bugged each other.

But it was what it was. And Patrick was determined to hold strong for David. Although he wasn’t strong enough to stop kissing him in that moment, so Patrick had grabbed David’s hand and yanked him toward the nearest utility closet he could find. It was small, and cramped, and there was a rolling mop bucket that took up most of the space to stand. But it didn’t matter, because they didn’t need much space. Their bodies had connected instantly, Patrick’s arms wrapping around David instantly and pulling him closer.

“Fuck, I can’t get enough of you.” Patrick breathed against his mouth, entranced by the way David’s stubble felt against his lips. He breathed him in, deep into his lungs, and sighed with relief, tossing his head back and exposing his neck for David to kiss and nip and lick.

“Ditto.” David replied against the skin of his throat, and Patrick chuckled and sighed at the feeling of David’s mouth on the sensitive exposed skin of his throat. “Mm, you’re bad, you know? You got a little risky with your hands there in the common room.” David said, his voice silky and seductive, but there was still just a shade of reproach. Patrick laughed.

“I’m sorry. If I lose you the bet, I’ll pay you back.”

“You can just pay for our date.” David suggested, and Patrick smiled.
“Deal.” He agreed, sealing it with a kiss. It stretched on for a moment, before David pulled back a little.

“But I don’t want to lose. It’s not about the money, it’s--”

“You don’t want to give Stevie the satisfaction.” Patrick supplied for him, and laughed. Because, fuck, he didn’t disagree.

“She’s trying to profit off of our relationship, Patrick.” David replied, annoyed, but all Patrick could really focus on was the word ‘relationship’ coming out of David’s mouth. It filled him with such pride and happiness, and he wanted to hear him say it again, and again, and again. But for now, he tried to focus on their conversation.

“Yeah, and I don’t like whatever the hell that was at breakfast…” Patrick agreed.

“Oh my God. What was that?” Patrick shook his head.

“I don’t know, but Stevie was clearly behind it. I promise I’ll try to be better, David. I don’t want Stevie to win either. She--”

As if on cue, Stevie’s voice echoed down the hallway. “I checked the snack bar and the men’s washroom, they weren’t there. Those fuckers ran off together…” She was talking loudly, from not much farther down the hall than the closet they were standing in. If she just opened the door, they’d be caught. David’s hand slid up over Patrick’s mouth, and his eyes went wide, and he pinned Patrick in place against the wall. Which wasn’t very comfortable, because there was a very unfortunately placed hook he’d been trying to avoid with the back of his head.

“Did you say you checked in the men’s room? Like, yourself?” Twyla replied, and Patrick could practically hear Stevie’s eye roll from here. He couldn’t actually see her, so he couldn’t say for sure she’d done it, but he was morally certain nonetheless.

“Uh oh, Twy, don’t tell the Dean or I might get kicked out!” She replied sarcastically. “Let’s go check their room! Like, yourself?” Twyla replied, and Patrick could practically hear Stevie’s eye roll from here. He couldn’t actually see her, so he couldn’t say for sure she’d done it, but he was morally certain nonetheless.
“Ow!” He said, and that only made David laugh harder, which in turn caused Patrick to break down into hysterics, and soon he was wiping tears from his eyes. It was just all so ridiculous. “Inspector Clousseau, on the case.” Patrick said through fits of laughter, when he was capable of words again, and David collapsed against his chest, completely overcome by a giggle-fit. Patrick didn’t know why it was so funny, really, but sometimes, things just were.

After a minute or two, they’d collected themselves out of their bout of contagious laughter, and Patrick sighed. “I guess we should go, before she finds out we’re not in our room and comes back.” He said, and even though it was dark, Patrick could still tell that David was pouting.

“Fine. I’ll go first, I need a minute or two in front of the mirror. If there’s even a hair out of place on my head, Stevie will get more suspicious.” He said, and Patrick laughed.


“Give me two minutes, then you leave, okay?” David asked, and Patrick smirked and wrapped his hand around David’s waist, and bumped their hips together, pressing his semi-firm (and hardening) erection against David.

“Yeah, I think I’m going to need a couple minutes.” He agreed, and then he leaned in to suck a wet, hot kiss against David’s neck. David moaned in response, and Patrick smiled carnally against the soft skin of his neck. “Running around and hiding like this? It’s kind of hot, I’m not gonna lie…” He added, because it was true. Almost getting caught by Stevie? It had been a thrill, and adrenaline rush, and surprisingly? A major turn-on. It got Patrick thinking about how hot it was to toe the line of almost getting caught. It gave him ideas.

“Mm, yeah, I--” David was practically purring, rolling his hips a little in response and tilting his head to give Patrick better access. Then suddenly, he stiffened and stopped, and pushed Patrick away. “Okay, you need to get off me, or I’m going to need way more than 2 minutes.” He laughed. “You’re an animal! I didn’t know this side of you existed.” He playfully slapped Patrick’s chest, who chuckled in response and shrugged.

“Neither did I. Never was before…” And there was maybe something about the way his words had turned soft and vulnerable at the end, that made David sweeten, and he placed a soft, delicate kiss gently on his lips, before pulling back.

“I’m just that irresistible, I guess?” He replied, and Patrick laughed.
“That must be it.” He said it like he was teasing or sarcastic, but in reality, truer words had never been spoken. David truly was irresistible, Patrick didn’t stand a chance around him. It would be a miracle if they got out of this bet without losing.

“Oh, well, Mr. Hands, I’m going to go fix my hair. Remember to wait a couple minutes.” David instructed, and Patrick smiled.

“I’ll miss you.” He said, only half-teasing. It was dark, but he could sense the shy, pleased smile that spread across David’s face, the way his eyes would dart away, bashful and shining with happiness.

“Oh, calm down.” He said, but Patrick knew he was happy. Patrick smiled. *Fuck,* did he love David Rose. From then on he knew he was completely and totally lost to the world, but that was okay because it felt like David was his world now And Patrick was his moon, just locked in his orbit. Hopefully for eternity.

Goddamn it, Patrick really was fucked, wasn’t he?

“You guys cozy over there?” Stevie asked, craning her neck to look down the length of the bed at them, cuddled on the other end.

“Mm, very.” David agreed, in a tone that told Stevie to ‘knock it off’. She’d been a pain in his ass all day, and he didn’t think it was going to get any better any time soon. She was like a hound dog that had picked up a scent, and nothing would stop her from finding her prey. It was seriously *annoying,* even if it *did* lead to some deliciously dangerous sneaking around with Patrick, which was honestly a lot of fun. But that didn’t make up for the pain in the ass Stevie was being, so he was a little extra bitchy to her, in terms of tone. She deserved it. “And how are you two doing over there? Getting comfy?”

He teased her, and enjoyed the flustered way her eyes darted around and the way she stammered over her words. “What? We? No, *you—*” David smiled at her, a bit evilly. Stevie had invited her new “friend” Jenny over for their Halloween movie marathon. They were all still exhausted from the night before, and it *was* officially the 31st of October, so they’d all gotten high and then piled onto Stevie’s bed to watch ‘*Hocus Pocus*’ and then *Halloween,* and if people were still awake, possibly *The Witches.*
David and Patrick, as usual, were sitting next to each other, and beside David was Twyla, currently wrapped comfortably around Miguel, who was leaning on Ted. And at the very end were Stevie and Jenny, looking pretty comfortable themselves. Twyla had brought a small flat screen tv back from Thanksgiving weekend, and they had it propped on a chair in front of the bed, so they could all see.

“Can we just watch the movie, guys?” Patrick said, beside him, and Ted nodded in agreement. David could tell Ted wasn’t a fan of the newfound tension in the group, and he was dying to say something, but he hadn’t cracked yet. David wondered why he cared so much, if he and Stevie were fighting. Which they weren’t. It was more of a frenemies thing, anyways, with a heavier weight to the ‘friend’ side than the ‘enemies’. David just didn’t want her to win their bet! He just needed to win, then things would go back to normal. He was happy for Stevie and Jenny, and he felt confident that Stevie knew that. Ted was just sensitive.

David had seen this movie a thousand times, it had been a staple in his house on Halloween since its release in the mid-90s. He still loved every minute of it, though it was hard to actually watch the movie, when Patrick’s wandering hands kept distracting him.

Patrick sat at the very end of the couch, his body curled towards David, his feet tucked in against him and his knees leaning over David’s thigh. His head was on David’s shoulder, and his left arm wrapped around him, his hand splayed over David’s chest. They would have looked like a couple to anyone who didn’t know them, David knew that, but he also knew it was safe, because David and Patrick always sat like this, when given the chance. It was kind of their thing.

What wasn’t safe was Patrick’s right hand, that was tucked out of view behind David’s back. At first it just moved up and down, rubbing, petting. David had scooted forward and arched back, giving Patrick a little more room because it felt nice, but then Patrick had enough room to sneak his hand up under David’s shirt, and then dip his fingers under David’s waistband, and okay, now David was getting hard and he thought Stevie might notice the catches in his breath, the way he’d shiver, or wiggle back into Patrick’s touch, unable to stop himself.

But Stevie was a little preoccupied with Jenny, down at the other end of the bed. After Patrick had shut down their bickering, she’d leaned back and Jenny was cuddling in, both of her arms wrapped around one of Stevie’s, her head resting on her shoulder. They looked fucking adorable, and David wanted to tease Stevie about it and make her squirm, but he was a little preoccupied with his own situation at that moment, as Patrick’s insistent fingers curled around his hip, dipping under the waistband of his boxers, just inches away from Twyla. If he extended a finger, he’d touch her. That’s how close they all were.

David turned his head and mouthed at Patrick ‘You’re bad!’ and Patrick just grinned at him.
mischievously. David shook his head, pulled his sweater down a little to cover the evidence of his raging erection, and did his best to focus on the movie. It was just a little hard, with the way Patrick was placing quiet and sneaky kisses to his arm and neck, or that one time he actually bit him on the shoulder. David had sucked in a breath, not expecting it, and had to hastily cover his reaction by explaining he was surprised by the movie (he wasn’t), all the while, Patrick’s intrepid fingers played with his waistband, curled around his hipbone. Teasing him.

Patrick, David was learning, was a gigantic fucking tease. And David, he was learning, loved every second of it. He just didn’t know how he was expected to keep this from his friends, or even keep his hands off Patrick’s cock until next Friday. For that matter, he didn’t know how he’d keep Patrick’s hands off his cock. His boyfriend, as it turned out, was a thirsty little bitch. And Frankly, David was here for it. Just… maybe not on a bed full of their friends when the bet and David’s money was on the line.

Okay, even then. David couldn’t get enough of Patrick, and that was just a fact. He was desperate to make some excuse to go back to his room, being certain that Patrick would find a way to follow him. He wanted to rip the shirt off Patrick’s back and suck deep purple marks into the skin of his chest, both to pay Patrick back for the way he’d been torturing him, and also just because he wanted to. With the thought of seeing Patrick, all marked up like that, David felt his cock throb again, almost painfully. Desperate to be touched. He wondered if he could reach down and adjust himself, or if that would draw Stevie’s attention, because he didn’t want that.

When Patrick’s fingers delved a little deeper under David’s waistband, moving from his hipbone to trace the ‘v’ where his leg met his groin, David couldn’t take it anymore. He wiggled away, pretending to need to sit up straight and stretch, yawning loudly for effect. He stretched one way towards his friends, twisting his spine and feeling it crack and catching a glimpse of Jenny and Stevie’s hands clasped, fingers entwined. Then he turned the other way, towards Patrick, and gave his new boyfriend a death-glare that would have made a flower wither and die. But Patrick just shot him a shit-eating grin and David rolled his eyes, a smile creeping onto his face unbidden.

A couple days later, David had declined to join Patrick and Ted on their run around campus, and had been enjoying a much-deserved sleep in. He’d skipped his Cultural Studies lecture, because they were showing a movie he’d seen several times, and was really just having the relaxing morning his body had been demanding. It was Wednesday now, and he and Patrick had been sneaking around since Sunday morning when Stevie had banged on their door. David didn’t know if he’d ever felt so exhausted.

But that could partially be because he’d been getting a lot less sleep, since he and Patrick had
gotten together. Patrick’s thirst, it turned out, seemed virtually unquenchable. They’d spent countless hours already rolling around their beds, choosing one at random, it seemed, and spending the night there together. So between the lack of sleep, and the constant vigilance it took to keep both Stevie off their case and Patrick off his dick, David was well-deserving of a late morning lie-in.

He was dozing in and out of consciousness a little past 11 when Patrick had burst into the room, with much more energy than he normally would. David shot upright, startled, and let out an embarrassing noise of alarm. “David!” Patrick shouted, as he jumped on top of him, still sweaty from his run (which was incorrect), and started shaking David’s shoulders.

“What the fuck!?” David shouted, alarmed, recoiling on instinct. Everything had happened so fast, his brain and his flight instinct had thought he’d been under attack. But as the initial shock dissipated, David realized how excited Patrick seemed. A smile was splitting his face, his eyes forced into little crescents, his cheeks were thrown so high.

“David, I’ve got it! We’ve got it!” Patrick enthused, still not making any sense, but he leaned back a little, and allowed David to sit up properly.

“Okay, take a deep breath and explain.” David said patiently, and Patrick did. He took a deep breath in and out, lifting and lowering a hand in front of himself for emphasis. After a couple rounds, he seemed to have control of himself.

“Your bet with Stevie. I have a way out of it.” He said, almost quivering with excitement. And okay, he had David’s full attention now, if he didn’t already. David licked his lips, feeling his heart rate increase.

“What? How? Let’s go, what are we waiting for!?” He responded, trying to scramble to his feet, but Patrick held him still.

“Wait, not yet. But soon we can get out of it. Way sooner than Christmas.” He replied, and while that was all extremely good news, David was ready for some specifics.

“And this just came to you when you were out running with Ted? What dirt did you get on Stevie? Are we going to blackmail her? Is it about Jenny, or has she committed an actual crime, because I wouldn’t put that past her…” David supplied, trying to spur Patrick into the juicy details he wanted.
“None of those. Well, yes it happened when I was out with Ted. But no, what we’re going to do is make a counter bet against her. One we can win and offset the losings from your original bet, maybe even make some profit, too, though I’m not sure how I feel about that yet.” Patrick explained, and David felt his spirits drop. Well that just wasn’t going to work. And he’d gotten so excited, too!

David shook his head. “She won’t accept a counter bet from either of us right now, she’d know exactly what we were doing. I’m pretty sure she knows we’re together, she just can’t prove it and it’s driving her nuts. She’s certain if she just sticks it out, we’ll slip up and she’ll win.” David replied, and waited to watch disappointment fall over his boyfriend’s sweet face. And yet, it didn’t. Patrick’s eyes remained just as shiny and excited, his smile didn’t falter even for a second. And now he was shaking his head in disagreement.

“No, we’re not going to place the bet. We’re gonna get Ted to do it.” He replied, practically giddy. David never saw Patrick like this, and he smiled that the thought of coming out as David’s boyfriend was making Patrick so happy. David was still confused though.

“Ted? What? Why Ted? Explain.” Patrick’s smile turned from gleeful to satisfied, and he settled back and tucked his legs under himself to sit cross-legged on David’s bed, right in front of him. So close, that their knees were touching. When he was ready, he took another deep breath, and began.

“Okay, so you remember breakfast on Sunday, when we found everyone crowding around Stevie?” Patrick started, and David narrowed his eyes.

“Yes…” He replied, not liking where this was going. What the fuck was Stevie up to?

“And you know how random people have been trying to get us to kiss or sit closer or whatever, each day since then? And it’s been super weird? First Sarah, then Blair and Dan, and then yesterday Caitlin and--”

“Jeremy, yeah.” David supplied, and his brows had practically knit together, he was thinking so hard, which was not a good look on him, unless he was trying to cosplay as Bert from Sesame Street.

“Exactly. Well, it turns out Stevie arranged another bet, a winner takes all pool on what day we finally get together, or screw up and they find proof. The whole dorm is in on it, it seems.” Patrick explained, and David’s eyes had gone wide, his jaw hung loose.
“What!” David cried, and Patrick chuckled ruefully.

“I know.” He said, reaching out and placing his hand on David’s knee, rubbing back and forth with his thumb. And all David could think was ‘That diabolical bitch!’ God, he loved Stevie. But God she was a pain in his ass. And then David realized, he still hadn’t figured out why this was such good news to Patrick.

“And how is this a good thing?” David asked. Maybe it was because he’d just woken up, or maybe it was because his brain was stuck on the fact that the entire dorm was conspiring against David and Patrick, but this still wasn’t making any sense to him.

“Because Ted hasn’t placed a bet. Yet.” Patrick replied, and seeing that David still wasn’t getting it, he laughed a little and rolled his eyes, teasing him. “Ted said the bet made him uncomfortable. I think he’s been dying to tell us since Sunday, actually, but Miguel had some money down and convinced him not to tell us. But it didn’t take much, he was acting awkward and I just basically mentioned that he was being weird, and it all spilled out of him.” Patrick explained.

“Everyone bet $10 bucks and picked a day. If more than one person chose a day, they split the pot. If it’s just one, they get it all. And it turns out that nobody placed a bet for next Thursday…” Patrick continued, and then, finally, something clicked in David’s brain. It must have showed on his face, because Patrick smiled. “Yeah, exactly.”

“You want to place a bet and rig it.” David said, and Patrick’s smile widened and he nodded enthusiastically. “But Stevie would never let us in on it.” David said, following the train of thought to the next logical conclusion. Patrick shook his head, echoing that, no, Stevie would never let them place bets on themselves. And then… “But Ted hasn’t placed a bet yet!” David said, suddenly feeling a surge of adrenaline and excitement wash through him. He bounced in place as the full picture of Patrick’s plan revealed itself to him. “Oh my God, what are we waiting for!? Let’s go talk to Ted right now!” David enthused, and Patrick laughed.

“Let’s give him a minute, I think he’s in the shower.” Patrick replied, and David quirked one eyebrow.

“I notice you didn’t shower yet, either.” He said, more teasing than anything. Patrick really wasn’t that bad right now. It was a brisk November morning, he hadn’t sweat that much. David wasn’t a fan of when Patrick was dripping in sweat, all slippery and gross. Well, no… that’s a lie. He loved to look at him like that, just not touch him. Or have him on his bed. But anyways, David might not like it when Patrick dripped sweat all over him, but he didn’t hate that manly, musky smell he got when his clean body got put through a workout. So he wasn’t in a rush to have Patrick go wash it all off. Maybe a quick make-out session, then shower, then Ted’s room? But David didn’t want to take too long and miss him. What was less important, Patrick showering, or a make out session?
They kissed for the next ten minutes, until the alarm David had set to stop them went off and interrupted. Patrick grunted and tried to whack at David’s phone, all lost in the kiss and not wanting to stop. But David wiggled away from him, with some difficulty because Patrick kept trying to pull him back, and pried himself away from Patrick’s octopus arms.

“Come on, get up. We have to go talk to Ted.” David said, swinging his legs up and around Patrick and onto the floor. Beside him, his boyfriend was pouting. “This was your idea.” David said with a laugh, looking at him as he opened one of the drawers of his wardrobe and pulled out a crisply folded white t-shirt.

“Fiiiiine.” Patrick groaned, slowly rolling to his side, and then swinging one leg dramatically off the bed, and then the other. David smiled at his pouty, insatiable boyfriend. David felt the same, he wasn’t a fan of interrupting make-out sessions for anything but the most utmost important obligations. But talking to Ted right now qualified.

On the way to Ted’s room, Patrick was pretty sure every person they passed was looking at them funny. Sort of like two big juicy pieces of meat. Probably thinking ‘don’t come out today, because my money is on next Sunday’, or something like that. Patrick was pretty sure the pot was over $200 or $300, if as many people were in on it as Ted had told him earlier, so people were clearly heavily invested in winning.

It sort of pissed Patrick off, but not in so much of a way that he’d actually be angry at anyone that participated, even Stevie really. But In such a way that he felt absolved of any lingering doubts that the ethics of rigging the bet and winning the big pot for themselves were unsound. Honestly, Patrick didn’t know why he should feel guilty, when all of these people were the ones interfering with his own business in such a frankly intrusive way. They deserved it, he told himself. Plus, if they won $300 bucks, they could pay Stevie back and have a nice little date night fund. It was worth it.

Ted and Miguel’s room was one floor down and two sections over, it didn’t take too long to get there. As they pushed their way through the final swinging heavy door or a galley bathroom, Patrick turned to David. He’d been thinking of this the whole walk here. “You know this means we’re going to have to tell Ted now, about us. Do you think he can keep a secret?” He asked. David considered his question.

“Yes, well, out of all our friends he wouldn’t be my first choice, but he’s far from the last. Twyla
would probably be my first choice, but I am pretty sure she’s team Stevie, when it comes down to it.” David said, being careful to keep his voice down. He didn’t want this conversation overheard by anyone, and now that they knew there were eyes and ears everywhere, just waiting for them to screw up, they had to be extra careful. He’d paused when he finished, looking thoughtful, and then scrunched his face up and shrugged. “And I don’t think we really have any choice but to trust him.”

Patrick nodded. “That’s true.” He conceded. And it was. They didn’t have any other options. And Ted had told him about the bet in the first place, so that had to count for something. It wasn’t Ted’s intentions that Patrick was worried about, though. It was his goofy way of just blurting things out without ever meaning to that had Patrick worried. But again… no other options.

“Do you think he’ll say yes?” David asked, his face contorted into a grimace of apprehension.

“I think he probably will?” Patrick replied, not really sure. “I think we should probably offer him a cut of the winnings, though.” He added. He’d thought about it, and it only seemed fair.

“Fine. Okay… knock.” David said, motioning to the Door and crossing his arms over his chest nervously.

“What? Why me? You knock.” Patrick argued, and David rolled his eyes.

“Like every other time we have this same argument, Patrick. Because I asked first.” David whispered at him, and Patrick scowled, knowing he lost, though a smile curled up on one side and spoiled the effect. He reached out his fist to knock firmly and decisively, three times.

“Uh, just a second!” They heard Ted call out from inside. “Just gotta-- Ow! --just gotta get my--” The door opened, and a shirtless Ted appeared, doing up the fly of his jeans. “Pants on.” He finished, then he looked up, saw David and Patrick waiting, and his smile turned wide and genuinely happy. “Oh, hey buds!” He said cheerfully.

“Hey, Ted. Is Miguel there?” Patrick asked. Beside him, David’s arms were still crossed nervously across his chest, and he bit his lip while looking down the hallway, as if checking for people spying on them.

“Nope, just little ol’ me right now. Miggy’s got English Lit until 1. What’s up, guys?” He asked, and Patrick got the impression he was actually hopeful that they might ask him a favour. Like
nothing in the world would make him happier than to do something for them right now. Ted was such a helpful and friendly guy, Patrick felt his hopes rise a little, that he might actually say yes.

“Mind if we come in?” Patrick asked, and as Ted stepped aside, Patrick and David entered the room, prepared to convince Ted to help them, by whatever means necessary.

The next day, David swatted Patrick’s wandering hands away from the front of his pants, smiling indulgently at his incorrigible boyfriend. It was getting harder and harder to hold Patrick back, the closer they got to their agreed upon date. David might have actually given up on trying to stop him, if it wasn’t for Patrick thanking him for his self control, in his rare moments of lucidity. But most of the time, Patrick seemed as desperate for sex as a man walking across a desert would be for water. And it was a bit of a problem at the moment, because they were currently in a very public place.

Ted, as it turned out, had patently refused any cut of their winnings. Although he did agree to help, telling them to think of it as a getting-together gift. He kept telling them how happy he was for them, and David had gotten the impression he’d actually genuinely meant it, too. Patrick, though, being the conscientious guy he was, had insisted they do something in exchange for him agreeing to place the bet on their behalf.

But when Patrick had insisted on doing something for Ted, David hadn’t expected this to be what was requested of them. Although… he probably should have. Because, since frosh week, every single member of their friend group had outright refused to go to the Peterborough Zoo with Ted. He liked to stand in front of each enclosure and talk endlessly about the animals, like an educational nature program that you couldn’t turn off or mute. Sometimes he’d go on about yaks for twenty minutes or more.

And this time, they couldn’t exactly ditch him, like they did last time. Considering how much they needed his help, and honestly, how grateful they were. So here they were, standing in front of the squirrel monkeys (which, okay, were pretty cute) and listening to Ted talk about feeding habits, and the features of their natural habitat.

Well, David was listening, at least. Patrick, on the other hand, was doing his very best to distract him. They’d already snuck off a few times, ducking behind a tree or a wall, or in one case, on the other side of a camel, to make out furiously for a minute or two, returning to Ted breathless and giggling. David didn’t think Ted was stupid, he knew what they were up to, but he was happy for them. Honestly, David thought he probably deserved a lot more than a trip to the zoo, for what he
was doing for them, and for the genuine happiness he thought Ted actually felt for them. So David tried to resolve himself to actually pay attention, in the times between make-out sessions.

To stop Patrick’s hand wandering back somewhere it shouldn’t be, he took it in his own, interlacing their fingers. Immediately, he felt Patrick’s thumb begin to brush back and forth over their knuckles, and he turned and placed a sweet kiss into David’s shoulder before smiling up at him. And David couldn’t help it. He didn’t care if Ted was standing right next to them, he needed to kiss Patrick, right then and there.

And that, David thought, as Patrick’s tongue pushed insistently into his mouth, was the first time they shamelessly made out in front of someone, due to their lack of self control. But he didn't think it would be their last. Luckily, Ted didn’t seem to care in the least, although when he noticed them in the reflection of the glass enclosure beside him, he did laugh and tell them to “Get a room, guys.”, though his words had no bite and it was clear he wasn’t bothered. He actually went right back into his discussion on monkey social structure, as if David and Patrick were still listening and not playing tonsil hockey right next to him.

They were going to owe Ted for this for a long time to come.

David and Patrick were lounging in bed on Sunday morning, alternating between kissing, dozing off, and talking with each other. Patrick was listening to David tell some story about some people Patrick didn’t know in his Psych seminar, but really, he was just watching David’s lips move. Thinking about how they felt against his own, how he loved the feel of his stubble and the fullness of his mouth, the expert way his tongue danced with his own. He loved how there was nothing tentative about David’s kisses, how they were wet and hot, and yet not sloppy in the least. Patrick had always had this urge to wipe his mouth, when he’d pull away from a kiss with Rachel. With David, he wanted to lick his lips.

Patrick was well and truly fucking, he was so in love with David Rose.

He knew he’d been bad, this last week. He’d put a lot more onus on David, when it came to keeping to the agreed-upon pace of their rounding of the bases, than he’d planned to. The problem was, when Patrick had asked to go slow and had agreed to a date two weeks away for them to move forward sexually, he hadn’t expected himself to be this out of control. Patrick had never been like this before. He’d always been ambivalent at best, when it came to sex. And yes, he should
have known things would be different with David. He just didn’t think that they would be this
different.

He honestly wouldn’t be upset with David, if he cracked and let them get to second base early (or
third base, or home plate, for that matter), although a part of him was happy it seemed like they
might actually make it. Patrick really did like living up to obligations. He’d always been raised with
the ‘your word is your bond’ mentality, and he liked doing what he said he was going to do. Even
if the only reason he was keeping his word was because his saint-like boyfriend kept stopping him
from breaking it.

Patrick didn’t think anyone had ever thought of David as saint-like, or that they might ever again.
But in this moment, it wasn’t all that far from the truth. Patrick was very impressed by David’s
self-control, especially considering he was pretty sure David wanted to move forward every bit as
much as Patrick did.

“You know, she’s only doing this stupid bet just to win our original one. Now that the whole dorm
is in on it, there’s practically nowhere to hide.” David complained, and Patrick realized he must
have changed subjects while Patrick was daydreaming about kissing him.

“We haven’t done too bad, so far. And it’s only four more days until Thursday.” Patrick replied,
trying to be encouraging, even though he was just as annoyed as David was. He couldn’t bear to
think of how much more touching and kissing they could have done, if they didn’t have to run
around hiding all the time. But Stevie and the rest of the dorm would pay for this lost time, in the
form of ten bucks each. So, he supposed it was a fair split.

“True. That is way better than waiting for Christmas.” David agreed.

“I honestly don’t think I would have made it. I might have had to sign up for campus snow removal
to pay you back for the money I lost you, if this bet hadn’t come up to save us.” Patrick replied,
serious. He’d actually taken one of the little paper flaps at the bottom of the sign that had been
posted on the Lady Eaton message board, thinking it might be a good way to make some extra
money to either pay David back, or take him out some time. The only catch was, he’d have to get
up before 6am on any day it snowed, and he didn’t think David would be a fan of him leaving their
bed that early, especially on weekends.

God, Patrick was already thinking of it as their bed. The thought made him more happy than it
probably should have. But it was true. Ever since they’d gotten together the previous Saturday,
they hadn’t even pretended to try to sleep apart. At night, in bed, they became this big
conglomerate of arms and legs, neither of them seeming to ever be able to pull the other one close
enough for their liking.
At that moment, Patrick was curled around David who was on his back, his head resting on his shoulder, his cheek on his chest. He had one knee thrown over David’s thighs and his free hand played with the smattering of chest hair that was slowly growing in, much to Patrick’s delight and David’s chagrin.

“Ugh, gross, stop, I am very overdue for a wax.” David said, noticing with a grimace and trying to push Patrick’s hand away. He didn’t let him.

“No, leave it, I like it. It’s hot.” Patrick replied, deadly serious. He hadn’t really examined the thought before, but he was now, and he was determining that he really, really liked it. It was… he didn’t know. Manly? That wasn’t quite right, but close. But he didn’t need a reason. It was just… sexy.

“What? You’d take that back if I waited a few more weeks and you got to see that you’re actually not dating a man at all, but really a lowland gorilla with a really good waxing regime.” David replied self deprecating. Patrick laughed.

“But you hate bananas.” Patrick teased, and David shook his head.

“I don’t hate bananas, I just don’t trust them.” He corrected, and Patrick laughed.

“I know, I know. Bananas are scary.”

“Okay, but I don't think you’re taking me seriously. Have I told you about the--”

“Spider incident? Yes, David.” Patrick laughed, rolling in and placing a kiss to David’s peck, right over his heart. He squeezed him tight as he did so.

“Mm, then you’ll know how serious and traumatizing that event was for me, and it happened during some very formative years, so…” Patrick smiled against David’s warm skin, then lifted his head to look at him in the eyes.
“I’ll protect you from spiders, David. I promise.” He said, making his words sound serious, and leaving the teasing implied. Because he was serious, he’d protect David from anything. But he was also teasing. Because really, when wasn’t he?

David smiled in response, though he was trying hard to hold it back with the usual progression: lips between teeth, dimples popping before the lips and smile broke free to twist to the side, eyes shining in delight. Patrick loved watching it, every time. It was half the reason he teased David so much, because his reactions were just so cute. “Mmhmm, yeah, I feel like in this relationship that insects in general should be, sort of like, your purview?” David agreed, and Patrick laughed and nodded.

“Okay David, don’t worry. I’ll protect you from the spiders and beetles and--”

“Moths.” David interrupted, and Patrick laughed again, and still smiling, craned his neck to stretch for a kiss.

“How could I forget the moths?” He teased, before their lips connected. And then there was no more talking for a while, as they’d cycled back around to the kissing part of their morning. Perhaps they’d doze off again after, or maybe get up and find some food or some friends. But that could wait, because all that mattered now was David. And David’s mouth. And David’s body. And David’s hands.

Fuck, Patrick thought for possibly the millionth time this past week as he licked into David’s mouth, his free hand squeezing his ass and pulling him closer. Is it Friday yet?

David and Patrick saw Stevie coming with just enough time to get their hands out of each other’s back pockets, spring apart, and wipe their mouths. They were in the main Lady Eaton building with the cafeteria and huge basement common room, but they were down the main hallway, towards the bridge that would take them to the rest of campus. When Stevie spotted them, her eyes narrowed, but David knew she had no proof, so they were safe.

“Hey, what’s up?” He said in what he hoped was a casual way. Beside him, Patrick stuck his hands in his pockets, likely also as an attempt to look casual. His shoulders were held a little high up close
to his ears though, and he had this adorable tight closed mouth smile with wide eyes and high brows. David had to stop himself from laughing. Or throwing himself at Patrick, for that matter. He was too cute. And he didn’t look casual at all. In fact, he looked *guilty as fuck.*

“Did I just *interrupt* anything?” Stevie asked suspiciously, still squinting at them.

“In the middle of a public hallway where anyone could see? Stevie, even if we *were* dating, that would be reckless and irresponsible.” David replied, and beside him, Patrick let out an almost-snort of laughter before holding it in. Stevie glared at him, then looked back at David and rolled her eyes.

“Whatever. I came to find you, me and Twyla are throwing a rager tomorrow and you two losers are coming. I just wanted to let you know.” She said, and Patrick quirked a brow.

“A rager? On a Tuesday?” He asked, and she shrugged.

“This place has been losing its edge lately, I think a wild Tuesday night is just what the doctor ordered.” Now Patrick shrugged, and tilted his head.

“Alright, sounds fun. I’m in.” He said, and David nodded, although inside he felt a rush of fear run through him. Could he and Patrick pull off not getting caught at a party, where *everyone* would be watching them, and drugs and alcohol would probably be involved?

“Yeah, I might be able to make an appearance.” He agreed, trying to quell his sudden rush of anxiety, and Stevie nodded.

“Good. Which brings me to my next question…” She started, and Patrick cut in.

“You want me to drive you to the liquor store.” Stevie smiled a little devilishly and nodded, and Patrick laughed. “When, now?”

“Now works for me, if you don’t have class.” She replied, and Patrick looked at David.

“You have a lecture soon, right?” He asked, looking like he was probably doing the math in his
head, about how long it would take to get to the nearest LCBO, shop, and get back. And whether or not David would be able to come with them or not. David smiled.

“You guys go, I’m good here, I could work on my Cultural Studies paper a little. Could you please get me some--”

“Vodka? Yep, anything else?” Patrick asked, reading his mind, and David thought.

“Oh, maybe a couple of those little--”

“Those packaged B-52 shots?”

“Yeah.”

“No problem.” Patrick replied, with a soft smile. David got lost in his eyes for a second, and lost track of time, or space, or any third parties that may be witnessing everything at that very moment.

“Jesus, just get married already.” Stevie said, and made some dramatic retching noises and a sick face.

“You still want that ride?” Patrick asked, a little sassy, a little threatening, but clearly in good nature. Stevie sighed.

“Yes.”

“Fine let’s go. See you later, David.” Patrick said, and he leaned forward, just a bit, and stopped himself. David froze, knowing that he’d been about to lean in for a kiss goodbye and caught it, and his heart raced wondering if Stevie would notice. But then Patrick lifted his arm and swatted the air in front of David. “Sorry, there was a bug.” He explained, and David was impressed with the slick cover-up attempt.

“My hero.” David replied with a smile, and Patrick turned to go. But just before he did, he caught David’s eye and gave him the subtlest of winks, and David felt his insides squirm and melt all at once. He watched them go until they turned out of view, the butterflies in his stomach still
fluttering wildly the whole time. And all he could think was how **lucky** he was. It still didn’t feel real, him and Patrick, even a week later. Because in what universe did David Rose get to be **this** happy?

But, that one dark thought notwithstanding, David left for his lecture in high spirits. And even though he was pretty sure this party Stevie was throwing the next day was just some elaborate scam to get him and Patrick to slip up while they were drunk, David was still looking forward to it. He loved a good Stevie rager, and it had been a while since she’d thrown one. He just hoped that she would stop with the Spanish Inquisition for a little while at least, so they could have some fun together. He was finding he sort of missed his best friend. This whole bet had put this weird sort of vibe between them. They were still close, but… David was just ready for it to be over.

*Two more days,* he told himself. *Two more days.*

Chapter End Notes

**PART TWO COMING TOMORROW!**

Thanks so much for reading! I am so excited to release the conclusion to this chapter tomorrow, but I hope you’ve enjoyed part 1 in the meantime! I’d love to hear what you think of The Bet so far!
The Bet - Part II

Chapter Summary

Part II of The Bet!

David and Patrick know about Stevie's pool and have placed a bet on themselves for Thursday. Can they make it though?

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! First of all, if you're here but you didn't read Part 1, which I posted yesterday, hit the previous chapter button!

But if you're here for part 2, I hope you're here to party :)

Thanks to everyone for your amazing comments, I've been too busy editing to reply but now I can and will! You guys are the best, thanks for keeping me motivated and excited to write!

ps. I really hope you like this one. I'm really excited to finally get this out of my head and into the world!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

David had thankfully been standing at the head of Patrick’s bed, pouring them new drinks, when their door had burst open without the benefit a knock to warn them. Without much surprise, it was an already-very tipsy Stevie, come to drag their asses across the hall. “You guys! You guys there’s a party going on and you’re not there!” She slurred, and Patrick laughed. Maybe it would be easier than he’d worried it would be, hiding their relationship from her tonight. If she was already this drunk, she might be passed out by 10.

“Hey Stevie, come on in.” Patrick replied sarcastically, reaching out and taking his glass of rye on the rocks from David, and winking at him in thanks. David’s shy pleased smile in response made Patrick smile.

“Come on, people are starting to show up and Kenny’s doing drinking games. You’re missing it.” She replied, reaching out to tug on Patrick’s arm. He remained seated, however, and just quirked an eyebrow at her and sipped his rye. Stevie looked… different. Definitely way less homeless than usual, at least. And was that… makeup?

Her hair was down but under control and holding a gentle wave, like she’d actually showered
some time within the last 24 hours, and used some sort of product afterwards. Her eyelashes were longer and darker, and she had some expertly applied eyeliner wings, something he hadn’t seen on her often. She was wearing this fitted white dress shirt with a loose green plaid tie, and tight black pants and sneakers, like an Avril Lavigne rip off circa 2003, but it was working for her. Stevie was always pretty, but it was obvious that tonight she was trying. And she was going for a look. And he had to wonder if he might know why…

“You look great tonight, Stevie. Trying to impress anyone in particular?” David asked suggestively, reading Patrick’s mind. Stevie’s answering blush was answer enough, but they both let the silence hang, forcing her to respond, not letting her out of it. She gave so many people so much shit on a daily basis, Patrick could hardly feel guilty for giving some back to her, when the opportunity arose.

“Jenny might be on her way.” She admitted, after a while, and Patrick smiled.

“Been seeing a lot of her, haven’t you, recently?” He asked, teasing, and Stevie glared at him.

“Shut up and come to my party. And feel free to cut the Goddamned shadare and come as a couple, why don’t you?” She said, and Patrick laughed.

“You know, usually, someone’s coming out is supposed to be a very personal and sacred thing, to be done on their own time.” Patrick pointed out, reasonably. “That is, if that’s what we were going to do. Which we’re not. Because we’re just friends.” He added, and she shook her head.

“Yeah, well, you guys have had plenty of time. Time’s up.” She replied, and when Patrick and David didn’t react, she rolled her eyes. “Okay fine, you don’t have to come out. But you do have to come to my party. Come on, she’s gonna be here soon!” She whined, and Patrick laughed, and took his whole rye in one swig. He squinted for a second, to bear the burning pain that passed down his throat and lit a fire in his belly.

“Woo!” He crowed, still trying to get past the initial shock. “Ok let’s go!” He said, with some actual genuine enthusiasm. Patrick couldn’t help it… he liked parties. And that was maybe his third drink already, in a fairly short period of time. He was ready to have some fun. Beside Stevie, David sipped on his vodka cranberry, unhurried. He was only just starting his second drink, and Patrick thought that might be for the best, if one of the two of them would keep their head about them.

This party was going to be fun, sure. But it was also going to be dangerous. And potentially expensive, too, if they slipped up and got caught doing something roommates and friends weren’t
supposed to be doing. And yet, with the benefit of 3 whiskeys warming his stomach, those possibilities didn’t seem overly concerning. He turned to David and held out his hand. “C’mon, roomie.” He said, and David rolled his eyes, but smiled, and took the hand offered to him and allowed himself to be pulled out of their room and down the short distance to Stevie’s and Twyla’s across the hall.

An hour later, and Stevie’s party had grown into a raging floor party, so big that even the RA wouldn’t have been able to shut it down. You know, if she’d actually been in the building, and not across the river at her boyfriend’s, having sex. Krista was simultaneously the best and worst resident advisor Patrick had ever heard of. The best because their building could get away with anything, because she was never there. The worst because… well… wasn’t she being paid for this? She could probably be doing a better job of it, though Patrick wasn’t going to complain any time soon, that was for sure.

The music was loud and the bass was thumping, and people were laughing and shouting all around him. Patrick’s head swam with the alcohol, a happy buzzing in his brain that made his limbs both heavier and lighter at the same time, and made him want to dance. Or maybe that was the fucking banger that was currently playing, NSYNC’s Bye Bye Bye. People everywhere were joining in to sing and dance as the chorus came around, and before Patrick knew it, so has he. He was jumping up and down, clapping his hand along in time with the tune, truly just screaming the words rather than singing them, and as he did, his eyes scanned the room for David.

They had been doing their best to hide their relationship, but Patrick was only human, and he’d almost screwed up a few times already. So he’d been sent to hang out with the third-string friends on the other side of the party. The final straw had been almost getting them caught while he’d been getting handsy, so David had finally sent him away. He’d then left Patrick for a while, to go hang out with Stevie, Jenny, and Twyla. They’d gone to smoke a joint that Patrick had wanted in on, but David had declared he couldn’t handle in his current inebriated state. Which was… fair. He’d probably puke if he smoked weed at that point.

But you know what else was going to make him puke? Being apart from David. It was almost painful, which was a little crazy and should be a little alarming too, but who was Patrick to argue? Over the past week and a half, Patrick’s body had become tuned to the frequency of David Rose, and the farther away he got, the more staticky that frequency would get. He needed to be close to him, close to the source, to continue functioning properly. To be operating with clear wavelengths.

If any of that made sense. Patrick was fucking drunk.

And then David’s eye caught his, and Patrick felt himself stumble back, completely knocked off
balance. He bumped into someone behind him, and he vaguely turned around and said “sorry, man.”, all the while trying not to break the eye contact with David. Patrick was doing everything he possibly could to eye-fuck David, and make him know it, but he didn’t know how well he was doing in his current state.

It must have worked, though, because David’s eyes had gone dark in return, and he walked towards him with a purpose. Patrick felt his heart start to race, at the knowledge that in just a few seconds, he’d be able to touch him, smell him, talk with him. Just be with him. That’s all Patrick ever wanted, really. Just to be with David.

And then he was there, and Patrick forgot everything about hiding, the bet, the other people in the room, everything. Because he was drunk, and happy to see his boyfriend, and he just really needed to be kissing David right now. “David!” He said excitedly, and lifted his hand to pull David closer, but it was smacked away and then he leaned in close to Patrick’s ear. Patrick sighed, breathing in the scent of him, even though it was clear David was mildly annoyed. Or worked up. Or something.

“It’s not fair to eye fuck me like that when I can’t do anything about it.” He whispered harshly, right into his ear, and Patrick shivered.

“Let’s fuck.” He said automatically in reply, probably way too loud, judging by the way David’s eyes went wide, and he slapped his hand over Patrick’s mouth.

“Quiet!” He hissed, looking around, making sure no one had heard. Then, seeing Stevie looking at them funny, he pulled his hand away from Patrick’s mouth, smiled at her weakly, and turned back to glare at him seriously for a second. He held it for a long beat before he cracked broke down laughing, to Patrick’s relief. Patrick joined him a second later, and soon they were in hysterics, and so were the people around them, not even really knowing why.

Patrick did sort of feel bad for forgetting the bet there for a second. But, he thought, in his defense, he was very drunk, and David was very hot. He felt he could hardly be blamed. Plus, all was well that ended well, right? Wasn’t that a saying? Patrick wasn’t sure, at that very moment, but he didn’t have long to think about it, because Stevie had interrupted the party and was shouting over the music that it was time to play spin the bottle. And… fuck. Of course she would, thought Patrick as a shock of fear rushed through him, and he couldn’t help himself. He gripped David’s arm, who’d gone stiff beside him, for reassurance.

“Just be cool. If it lands on one of us, we act like we don’t want to kiss, and give a tiny peck if they make us.” David said, leaning in close enough so that Patrick could hear. Patrick was aware that Stevie’s eyes were on them the entire time, but surely talking to David was okay? It didn’t prove anything. He nodded his understanding.
“That was definitely on Jenny, not Miguel.” David insisted, and enjoyed as Stevie tried and failed to hide the very pleased look on her face in response. She was turning an adorable red colour, and if David wasn’t mistaken, Jenny was as well. David had hung out with Stevie’s new “friend” a couple times so far and really enjoyed her company. She was sharp, and funny, and pretty cute. And she had this adorable east-coast accent that he had to admit was pretty irresistible.

He liked this for Stevie.

And so he lied, and said the bottle was on Jenny, when it was very clearly on Miguel, just so he could watch them kiss for the first time. Awkwardly. In public. It was glorious. Stevie deserved this.

David was drunk, although not as drunk as Patrick, and definitely not as drunk as Ted, who was currently shirtless for some reason and had taken to calling everyone, regardless of gender, “Big Guy”. He’d also clearly installed some sort of magnet or remote device that stopped the bottle on himself, almost every time. It was truly uncanny, how many people Ted had kissed that night, David and Patrick included.

David had not liked watching Patrick kiss Ted. He’d looked at David, right before, these apologetic puppy-dog eyes, and then scrunched them closed and pursed his lips tightly, and waited. Ted had grabbed him by both cheeks and pulled him in for a 3.5 second-long (not that David was counting) closed mouth kiss, which had been followed by a whole lot of whistles and cheers, and people asking David if he was jealous.

David was, in fact, extremely jealous. But he couldn’t tell them that, so he just rolled his eyes and laughed and told them to fuck off.

By some miracle, neither David’s nor Patrick’s bottle landed on the other. He’d been worried, and he’d known this had been Stevie’s plan to begin with. He could see her getting more and more frustrated with each passing turn as they didn’t land on one another. David kissed Twyla, then Sarah, then Ted, and then (to Patrick’s very obvious dismay) Jake. He obviously had kept each kiss short and cute, and hadn’t felt anything during any of them, but beside him, he could feel Patrick getting antsier with each one.
He was sitting with his back against Twyla’s bed, and Patrick was to his right, some guy David didn’t know too well on his left. He thought his name might be Christopher? He didn’t care. He didn’t care about a lot of things at that moment, except maybe trying to keep his horn-dog of a boyfriend off of him in public.

Honestly, David had no idea Patrick would be this clingy and possessive and into PDA. He secretly loved it, but it was also sort of killing him to keep shutting Patrick down like this. Because, fuck, it wasn’t that David didn’t want it. In fact, with the influence of alcohol and Patrick’s insatiable behaviour, he’d come pretty close to saying ‘fuck it’ a few times tonight, and just sticking his tongue down Patrick’s throat then and there.

Except, he kept catching Stevie (and others), watching them. Stevie had seemed extra motivated for David and Patrick to get together tonight, continuously insisting that she just wanted them to be happy and have fun and that they’d have more fun together. But David had later confirmed from drunk-Ted that today was Stevie’s chosen day in her side bet. He’d suspected it before, but now he knew for sure. If they hooked up today, not only would Stevie win the $50 bet they’d made, but she’d also win the entire pot from everyone else.

And David could not let her win like that. Besides, in his mind, that money was already his and Patrick’s. So he sat on his hands, bit the inside of his lips, and did his level best to ignore Patrick’s wandering hands or the sweet nothings Patrick would whisper in his ear, if you counted things like “I want to suck your dick” or “fuck me, David” as ‘sweet nothings’. Drunk-Patrick was a very horny Patrick, David was finding. And in any other circumstance that would be a great thing.

But two things were stopping that from being great news right now. The first being the very public setting they were in, and the bet-related reasons. The second being that they hadn’t even gotten to their agreed upon date for handjobs yet, and here Patrick was talking about sucking dicks or--could he have really meant this?--fucking him.

David needed a cold shower. Except he wasn’t going to get that opportunity tonight, so instead he just tried to keep his eyes on the prize. The $300+ prize. Damn, he could use that money, he thought. It was absolutely crazy to think that at one point, only a few months ago, he was giving out tips that big. Dropping thousands on a single night in some Greek beach-side villa, or bottle service in the VIP section. Everything had changed these past months. Everything. And yet, somehow, that old life, the one he’d lived for so long? Full of privilege and excess? That was the one that didn’t feel real, anymore.

David would choose being broke with Patrick and this group of friends, than richer than Croesus, but back in his old life. With his old… could you even call them friends? Not a single one had reached out, since he’d left Europe in disgrace. Fuck those people.
He squeezed Patrick’s hand. He was allowing him to hold it, because it was frankly safer than giving Patrick the freedom to move it wherever he wanted. It kept ending up on his ass or inner thigh, and David had to keep subtly moving it away before anyone noticed. Holding hands was safe for them, because they’d done it countless times before they’d ever kissed. People expected it of them. But they wouldn’t expect to see Patrick’s hand groping David’s crotch or ass, so he had to utilize constant vigilance to keep Patrick in line.

No matter what Patrick did, David kept dodging his touches and his kisses. Which was super annoying and made him sad. Why couldn’t all these people just go away, so Patrick could make out with his boyfriend? And David was looking so good tonight, maybe he’d fuck him, too. Or... get fucked? That idea gave Patrick a wild thrill, and even his drunken dick seemed to like it too, as he felt it spring to life as he pictured what it might be like. If they did it tonight, when he was drunk like this, it might not even hurt…

Okay, Patrick was very intoxicated. He’d forgotten all about his deal with David about going slow several drinks ago, and at that point he was going back and forth on remembering about the bet at all. He really was trying to be good, but Stevie just kept feeding him drink after drink. It was like she wanted him to get drunk!

When she’d handed him the last one, she’d leaned in and asked him, “So are you gonna kiss David tonight?”, all conspiratorial. And Patrick had almost answered yes, but David had yanked him away from Stevie just in time, and actually hissed at her, which made Patrick laugh. His boyfriend was so funny.

Spin the bottle had wound down after a little while, with Stevie clearly annoyed that her plan had failed. David, however, was feeling very smug about it. And he let her know with a smirk and a single quirked eyebrow.

“Well that was fun!” David said a little too enthusiastically, and Stevie glared at him. But beside her, Twyla beamed, and David noticed. “I saw that kiss with Matt got pretty steamy.” David teased, enjoying how it made her blush.

“His name is Mutt, and, yeah, he’s pretty cute. He’s in my Environmental Studies class, and—” She explained, but David had to stop her.
“Wait, what? Mutt? No, his name is Matt. I’m sure he said it was Matt.” He said, unable to stop himself. Mutt? What in the flying fuck?

Beside him, Patrick laughed and shook his head. “Naw, s’names definitely Mutt.” Patrick said, giggling when he got to the name, and lifting his stolen beer to his lips, still chuckling. David looked at him like he’d grown a second head.

“Umm, no. Mutt is not a name. Matt is a name. Mutt is an animal.” David argued, and beside him, Patrick snorted. Literally, he snorted. David looked at him.

“Tell that to ‘is Mom’n’Dad.” He laughed, and David just gaped at him, horrified. Seriously? Mutt!?

“Name notwithstanding, he’s a good guy. That’s why I invited him. He’s from Ottonabee.” Stevie said, and David tried to get on board for Twyla’s sake, but he couldn’t seem to get over it. Mutt?

“But he says he likes Lady Eaton better, because we’re closer to nature.” Twyla chirped in, smiling dreamily. Her eyes were a little red and bloodshot, and she swayed a little, but she looked happy. So David decided he was happy. Ridiculous name or no ridiculous name.

“Okay.” David agreed. “I like this for you so I’m going to let it go. But, seriously, do you think if I just call him Matt he’ll, like, notice and correct me?”

“Will the answer to your question change your decision to call him by the wrong name?” Stevie challenged, and David paused to think.

“No, I’m still going to call him Matt. Mutt is just… incorrect. But he’s still hot, and he seems good for you Twy-light. And he seemed super into that kiss, too.” He said, and Twyla’s face practically split in half, her smile was so wide (and blindingly bright).

“You really think?” She asked, and they all chatted about Twyla’s new future-boyfriend for a while. And as they talked, David had felt Patrick’s searching fingers pawing at his pant leg, clearly wanting attention. So David smiled, and lowered his arm from across his chest, and reached to take Patrick’s hand. Patrick hummed when he did, and David glanced to make sure no one noticed, but he thought they were safe. Patrick immediately started to brush his thumb back and forth over David’s knuckles, and now it was David’s turn to hum in enjoyment.
“What’s going on there, loverboys!?” Stevie cut in out of nowhere, startling David and making him jump. He dropped Patrick’s hand like it had burned him, perhaps a little hastily because it made him look really guilty, but the damage was done, so he lifted his hand to join his other in wrapping around a glass full of pink coloured alcohol.

“Literally nothing that concerns you.” David replied haughtily, turning his nose and chin up at her. She furrowed her brow.

“You two assholes are fucking, aren’t you? Just admit it.” She accused, suddenly, poking her finger into David’s, and then Patrick’s chest.

“Nope, we’re definitely not fucking…” Patrick said, and before he could say the word ‘yet’ (which David just had a feeling was about to come out of his mouth), David cut in.

“I can tell you two things with the utmost sincere honesty, Stevie: The first? We’re not fucking. The second? Fuck off.” David said, using a soft, sincere tone, and reaching out to put his hand on her shoulder. “And I mean that, from the bottom of my heart.” Stevie scowled at him, making David smile, and wiggled away from his grasp.

“Fine? You wanna play like that? Well I’ve got games too, Rose. I’ve got games for days!” She threatened, and David just laughed and looked at her in amusement. That was, he was amused until she started climbing up onto her bed, and calling the attention of the crowd. “And for our next game, we’re playing seven minutes in heaven!” She declared, and she twisted to grab two items off the shelf behind her bed. A tube of red lipstick, and a black sharpie. She had clearly planned this out beforehand, he thought, unsurprised.

Around David, the crowd in Stevie and Twyla’s room laughed and cheered, with only a couple ‘boo’s’ (to which Patrick joined in beside him). When they calmed down, Stevie continued.

“Okay, first up--” She called, but David cut her off.
“Let me guess, me and Patrick.” He supplied, his voice deadpan and dripping derision. Stevie smiled devilishly in reply, like the cat that got the canary. “Very original, Stevie. What’s next, truth or dare?” He asked, and she shrugged.

“Depends how seven minutes in heaven goes.” She replied, causing David to roll his eyes in frustration. He’d been having fun at this party, as annoying as it was that he wasn’t able to be more openly affectionate with Patrick, he was having fun. Why did Stevie have to go and ruin that by stressing him out all over again? He’d been half hoping she might get so drunk she’d forget about the bet, but no such luck. Why did she have to ruin a perfectly good party with this poorly laid entrapment plan?

Beside David, Patrick was very quiet, but as much as he wanted to, David wouldn’t allow himself to look at him. He couldn’t give Stevie the satisfaction. Or any more facial expressions to read. He knew she was watching them like a hawk. So David did the only thing that made sense to him, the only logical conclusion. He put on an air of aloofness and haughtiness and decided to just act confident, even if he felt anything but that. He reached forward and snatched the lipstick from Stevie’s hand.

“Drown in a toilet, Stevie. Fine, we’ll go in there, but we’re not kissing, because as I’ve explained to--” He turned to gesture at the whole room, and then back at Stevie. “we’re just friends. And frankly, I’m a little insulted that you would be willing to risk our previously-fractured, still fragile relationship, for your little--” David struggled to find words to finish his sentence. “For your amusement!” He finally finished, his tone turning from aloof to indignant far too quickly. Beside him, he saw Patrick turn towards him in his periphery.

“Still fragile?” He asked, his voice small, sad. His eyes wide and puppy-like. David rolled his eyes yet again, and turned to his drunken boyfriend.

“We’re fine, shush.” He said, trying to speak with his eyes. We’re great, he said wordlessly, before continuing. “But we’re just friends, and we don’t want to be forced into kissing each other and making it weird. Right?” He asked, still pleading with Patrick with his eyes to go along with it. He thought he had a 50/50 shot, or at least 60/40, what with his current state of inebriation considered into it.

To his relief, Patrick started raggedly nodding his head in agreement, before turning to Stevie. “Yeah c’mon Stevie, you know we’re just friends. Stop trying to screw that up for me.” He said, and David’s eyes went a little wide, and he felt a flush run up his neck. Patrick’s choice of wording, and the way he said it... me, not us. It was a bit too drunkenly vulnerable, and David could already tell Stevie was picking up on it. He needed to distract her.

“Fine, draw whatever you want, we’re not making out, Stevie.” He said, drawing everyone’s
attention to himself, and then he turned and grabbed Patrick’s cheeks between his finger and thumb of one hand, squishing his lips out. Like this, lips pursed, it was almost like they were going to kiss. David wanted to kiss him, Patrick had closed his eyes like he was expecting a kiss, but David couldn’t. Instead, he bit the cap off the lipstick, and carefully applied it to Patrick’s lips. It was garish and red, and David had no idea where Stevie had gotten it because he’d never seen her wear it before. He hoped it was hygienic.

When he was done, David surveyed his handy work. Patrick looked… well he looked fucking delicious. Good enough to eat. Although, that was probably several steps down the line in their “enjoy every step” itinerary. They hadn’t even gotten to hands yet. Three more days, David told himself, for probably the thousandth time.

Patrick smacked his lips, and suddenly, David had flashbacks of the last time Patrick had worn lipstick. Halloween. Just thinking about it made David’s dick come to life, blood rushing to the organ at a dangerously rapid velocity. But getting a boner in front of Stevie and everyone right now just wouldn’t do, so David swallowed hard, stuck his chin in the air, and grabbed Patrick by the arm. “Come on, let’s get this over with.” He said, and Patrick followed him, limp and pliant, and David tried not to think about just how pliant he was, and what he could do with that, given the chance. But it was hard. About as hard as something else right now. Fuck.

The closets in these dorm rooms were surprisingly spacious, and Stevie had an almost concerningly small amount of clothes that required hanging, so there was a decent amount of room in there for the two of them. David was glad they wouldn’t have to be pressed up against each other, because if they did, he didn’t think he’d have had the self restraint to hold back.

The first thing David was set a timer on his phone, and then he quickly pushed Patrick (who was clearly in the mood to grind) as far away from himself as he could, as painful as it was, to the other side of the closet. Which, really, was only a few more inches than he was already standing. Patrick pouted.

“David I want to kiss you.” He said, and David bit his lip.

“Stop making this harder, so do I. But we can’t, you’re wearing lipstick. Stevie is a diabolical genius. Everyone would know.” He replied, and though he couldn’t see it anymore due to the darkness of the closet, he sensed Patrick’s pout.

“Just a bit, they won’t know. C’mon, David, I need you.” Patrick whined, and David once again bit his lip, this time so hard he may have left a mark that would need time to heal. Since when was David Rose the picture of patience and self-restraint? Where was all of this coming from? How was he resisting the bone-deep urge he had to--well--jump Patrick’s bones?
“They will know, you’re wearing red clown lipstick, it’ll get all over both of our faces if we kiss right now.” David replied, as quietly as he could, because he was pretty sure Stevie’s ear was probably pressed to the closet door at that very second.

“I thought it was kinda hot.” Patrick said, obviously a little hurt and taking umbrance with him calling the shade of red ‘clown lipstick’. And fuck, if he wasn’t right. David sighed.

“It is hot.” He conceded.

“So kiss me, I need you.” Patrick replied, and David groaned quietly.

“Fuck, I do too, Patrick. Just two more days though, remember? We can’t let her win, not after tonight. Especially not tonight. Look at how drunk she’s gotten you, trying to take advantage of that. Don’t let her. Two more days.”

“Two more days…” Patrick said, like he was tasting the words. Figuring out whether they were palatable or not.

“Just two more days. We can do this.” David said encouragingly.

“We can do this…” Patrick echoed, like he didn’t believe it himself, but he trusted David, and would follow his lead. There was this drunken sweetness or innocence to Patrick right now, this guileless obliging energy that just made David want to drag him back to his room and do dirty things to him. But David was supposed to be holding back. Not only from going public with their relationship, but also from going too fast behind closed doors. But they were close. Only two more days. Just two days.

“How much longer?” Patrick asked, and David assumed he was referring to their time in the closet, and he had no idea. He pulled out his phone, and saw that just under two minutes had passed.

“About five minutes, but I bet Stevie will open the door early to try to catch us.” And suddenly, looking at his phone, he had an idea. “Go on your phone, look bored. I’d love to see her face if she opens up the door and we’re both just scrolling insta or whatever.” David instructed, and Patrick immediately pulled out is phone. A couple seconds later, David’s phone pinged. It was a message from Patrick. David looked over at him before opening it. Now that his phone was out, a glow illuminated Patrick’s features, and David could see a smirk there, and his tongue poking out just a
bit as he typed another message. Smiling, David tapped the notification and opened Patrick’s message.

**I want to suck your dick 😊**

If David had been taking a sip of his drink, he would have spit it everywhere. Drunken Patrick sure did have a way with words… and he was a lot more open and honest than sober Patrick, that was for sure. Sober Patrick liked to push the envelope too, but he probably wouldn’t have said this quite so elegantly. Or at all. David was just trying to think of some sort of response when the next text came through.

**YOU’RE so fukigbhot David I want you to fuck mesonbad just kiss me I want to taste you**

David bit his lip, and typed back, trying to control his smile.

*Do you now? Verrrrry interesting, Patrick. And how many more steps before we get to that?*

He hit send, and then he quickly added. *I hope you don’t regret saying that when you see our chat history in the morning.*

**F*uck the steps**

*I thought you wanted me to fuck *you*? 😊*

**Yesbplease that too**

*Was that alcohol in your drink tonight, or truth serum?*

David honestly didn’t know what to say, and he was sort of glad this conversation was happening by text because he didn’t think he’d have the words to respond, he was so gobsmacked. Patrick wanted David to fuck him? Holy Shit. It’s not that David didn’t want that… he did. He very much did. It’s just, it sort of felt so outside of the realm of possibility, he hadn’t thought about it as much as he would have, if he’d considered it an actual option.
David supposed he’d just always thought Patrick would want to exclusively top. Probably because he’d previously only ever been with people with vaginas, and he’d always been a top. But… maybe that was part of it? As much as David wanted to keep playing with Patrick via text, and coaxing some more deep dark secret truths out of him, he felt a twinge of guilt at the thought. Was that taking advantage of him? If Patrick wanted to say these things to him, wouldn’t he have done it sober?

Because Patrick had said many dirty things to David already. Filthy things, really. But never that. David bit his lip, torn between being a good person and saving Patrick from himself, and seeing how far he could push this envelope before their seven minutes in heaven were over. Beside him, David could see Patrick smiling in the glow of his phone, his thumbs tapping quickly. David bit his lip, waiting for the text to come through. The feelings of adrenaline and desire were strong and heady, intensifying the effects of the alcohol David had in his system. He felt almost dizzy with need, and felt his resolve to stay away from Patrick slipping.

And then the text came through, and David felt his heart begin to pound. Still biting his lip, he stretched his thumb to hit the icon and--

“GOTCHA!!!” Stevie shouted, throwing open the doors and blinding David with the sudden brightness. He squinted, and visored his eyes with his hand, his other one still holding his phone, his sext from Patrick as yet tragically unopened. As his eyes adjusted, he saw the disappointed scowl of anger on Stevie’s face, and then at all of the shocked expressions on the people around her, and smirked.

“It’s only been five minutes and thirty-seven seconds, I’d say you just forfeited your sharpie-rights.” David said, casually and confidently, holding out his phone.

“Did we win?” Patrick asked hopefully, from beside him, and David laughed.

“The night isn’t over yet.” Stevie said, her tone ominous and threatening, but David just shrugged and pushed past her to step out of the closet. The irony wasn’t lost on him, as Patrick followed him, that there were several jokes to be made about coming out of the closet, but his boyfriend to that point in life had not yet actually come out. He felt a twinge of nervousness and excitement, at the thought that such a big milestone was only two days away. That was, if Patrick didn’t change his mind. David didn’t really think he would, but there was still that voice in the back of his head, the one that told him never to trust anything that made him so happy. Old habits were hard to break sometimes.

Pushing that aside, he reached for his drink that he’d left on top of Stevie’s bar fridge, and then
rounded back on his duplicitous best friend. “Well considering we won by default, it’s our turn to choose. And, hmmm, we choose…” David pretended to think for about two whole seconds before he quirked an eyebrow at Stevie and smiled deviously. “Stevie and Jenny.” He finished, to a chorus of ‘oooooohs’ and laughs from the other people around.

Stevie tried to scowl at him, but the corners of her mouth were twitching and she looked far too pleased to pull off mad, so she gave up and covered her face with her hands, looking suitably embarrassed instead. David also noted that Jenny didn’t look too upset about the situation, either. Quite the opposite, in fact. David felt his smirk shift more into a smile of genuine happiness, for Stevie and Jenny. He didn’t know if it would work out with them, but he knew that right here and right now, they liked each other. And David was more than happy to be the catalyst that brought their lips together for the first time.

Plus, David would be able to tease Stevie about this for weeks to come, so it was really a win-win situation.

Without much resistance, Stevie applied lipstick carefully to Jenny’s pursed lips, cupping her cheek with her thumb hooked under her chin gently, and then entered the closet together. David started his timer the second the doors were shut, and then finally, he was able to turn to Patrick. He hadn’t forgotten the texts Patrick had sent him, and the last unopened one was taunting him. But he didn’t open it, not yet.

Patrick was a mess, an extremely hot mess. His lengthening curls were wild, his cheeks ruddy, his eyes glassy, though wide and happy and still full of life despite the hour and the number of drinks he’d had to that point. And his lips… he still wore the red lipstick, slightly smudged on his bottom, bright against his pale skin and light blue henley. David took in a sharp breath, unable to control himself, and bit down hard on the inside of his cheek. Patrick looked deliciously sinful, with his wide innocent eyes and painted lips. Good enough to eat. Fuck, David thought, Is it Friday yet?

All David wanted to do was drag Patrick back to their room and ravish him, to smear that lipstick all over both of their faces and stain their sheets. But he couldn’t, and it was just about tearing him apart. But Patrick was looking at him expectantly, his face open and expressive. He looked happy, proud of himself. “We did it!” He enthused, and David’s eyes widened for a second before he grabbed Patrick’s arm and yanked him towards Twyla’s side of the room, where there were less people and he knew she had a box of tissues.

“Oooohkay, let’s just… get you…” David said, trailing off, as he grabbed two tissues from the box at the head of Twyla’s bed and turning back to Patrick. The second their eyes met, it was like an electric jolt from his heart to his cock. Patrick’s eyes were dark, hungry. David glanced over his shoulder, there was no one right next to them, no one within earshot, the music was so loud. In the background, Fascination by The Beaches played, the guitar and vocals drowning them out for the moment. “Fuck.” David said, unable to stop himself, as he got caught in the tractor beam of
Patrick’s stare.

“I want you David.” Patrick said plainly, directly, his eye contact never wavering. He took a step forward. They were only inches apart. David’s heart pounded. *People would see.*

He didn’t care.

“I want you too, fuck I want you so bad, Patrick.” David admitted, letting his resolve to hold back crack and shatter under the piercing force of Parick’s gaze. A moment stretched in time, and for a second, David thought Patrick was going to lean forward and kiss him. And if he had, David knew in his bones that he would have kissed him back. *Fuck the bet.*

But then the song changed. The first iconic chords of *Ahead By a Century* ringing out, and the energy of the room, of the moment, changed along with the song. David shook his head, and realized how close he was to Patrick, how close he had come to kissing him. He took a step back, regretfully, and held up the tissue. “Gimme your face.” He said, and Patrick obediently lifted his chin and let David take his cheeks between his fingers, allowing him scrub at his lips with the tissue in his other hand.

“*Ow,*” Patrick said, as David scrubbed perhaps a bit too hard, but the lipstick was stubborn and refused to come off the whole way. David smiled apologetically.

“Sorry, I got most of it off, I think it’s the best we can do for now.” He said, scrunching up the tissues in his fist and tossing the wad into the trash by the foot of the bed. Then David turned back to Patrick and surveyed his handiwork. Patrick still looked delicious and sinful, only now his lips were slightly less red, though still rosy. There were still slight smudges here and there, and quite frankly (and quite problematically) David thought Patrick looked even hotter like this than he had with the full ruby lips.

In need of a distraction, David pulled out his phone and found that Stevie and Jenny only had a little over a minute left, so he took a moment to refill his drink, and then found a place in front of the closet, and started the countdown with ten seconds left. Behind him, everyone joined in. “Ten! Nine! Eight!” David watched the seconds tick past, and with 3 left to go, he placed his hand on the handle to the closet door. “Two! One!” Everyone counted, and David opened the door.

David hadn’t really known what to expect, but when he’d opened the door to find Stevie and Jenny entwined in each other’s arms, faces smeared red, staring out at the crowd like deer in headlights, David couldn’t help but smile.
And then the cheering and clapping started.

Stevie was so distracted after that, that David had begun to think she’d forgotten about the bet, and that he was safe. He’d finally allowed himself to relax, and he’d had a couple more drinks than he may have, had he been trying to keep his wits about him. But it was okay, because Stevie was lost to the world now. Her time in the closet with Jenny had apparently opened the floodgates for the two of them, and they were presently making out openly on Stevie’s bed.

David was insanely jealous. Not of kissing Stevie, of course, but of just making out in general. He wanted to be making out. With his boyfriend. And it must have showed on his face, because Patrick came over to him from where he’d been talking with Kenny and some of the jocks and threw his arm around David’s shoulders, leaning in to whisper into his ear. “Soon that’ll be us.” He said, and David shivered and bit his lip, nodding. Two more days. Two more days.

“Hey buds!” Ted said as he walked up behind them, and slapping them each on a shoulder and putting his face between theirs.

“Ted! Buddy!” Patrick replied, pulling his arm away from David and twisting around to hug a very drunk and very shirtless Ted Mullens. David felt every hair on his body stand on end, as an electric jolt of jealousy shot through him. Which was… interesting. David wasn’t used to feeling jealous in this particular way, he didn’t know how to handle it. He’d of course been jealous before, just moments before he’d been jealous of Stevie being able to openly make out with her girlfriend(?) when David and Patrick couldn’t. But he’d never had someone special to him, like Patrick was, someone he didn’t want to see hugging other shirtless guys. And somehow this was worse than the kiss, because this wasn’t a game.

There was a wolf inside his chest that David hadn’t known about until that very moment, and right now, it was snarling, hackles raised. And for one scary second, David almost wanted to see it attack. Luckily, that second passed, and the hug ended, and sanity returned to David after that. Ted was obviously hammered, and David quickly remembered what a good guy he was. And how much he’d helped them, by telling them about this bet and helping them place one for themselves. Ted was a good guy, David remembered, the idea filtering through his drunken brain. Ted was a good guy.

David still stepped in next to Patrick and looped his arm through his, pulling him to his side. Was it possessive? Yes. But he couldn’t really do much about that right now. David was operating on much baser instincts, at that moment, than he was during sober daytime hours. And at that moment, he was dealing with a quickly hardening erection, a residual effect of feeling the
adrenaline of the jealousy, he supposed. Or maybe it was the fact that now, after feeling so
insanely jealous, he was left feeling just insanely turned on instead. Because all he could think
about was reminding Patrick who his boyfriend was, and just how good he could make him feel.

“You dudes having fun?” Ted asked, smiling, but his eyes shot down to where David was gripping
Patrick’s arm, and he loosened his hold just a little.

“Not as much fun as Stevie.” David replied, a little petulant because Ted knew, so he could be
honest with him.

“Aww, it’s okay big guy.” He said, reaching out to rub his hand up and down David’s arm, 
comfortingly. Then he twisted to look behind him, to see if anyone was listening. “Just two more
days until Thursday. One more, really, because it’s almost midnight. You guys have a plan for how
you’re gonna do it?” He asked, when he saw the coast was clear.

“I have a couple ideas.” Patrick answered, surprising David. He did? They hadn’t come to a
decision, the last time he’d checked.

“You do?” David asked, turning to face him. Patrick smiled a little crookedly, and shrugged shyly.

“I might be working on a little something.” He replied, and okay, David had no idea what he meant
by that.

“Working on a little something?” David repeated back as a question, his voice rising a little higher
and louder than he’d planned on. Again, Patrick shrugged.

“You’ll see.” He replied, enigmatically.

“I’ll see?” David parroted back, his anxiety and curiosity spiking.

But Patrick didn’t get a chance to reply. Because suddenly, all the heads in the room turned
towards Stevie who had rushed to her feet, her face still rosy with smeared lipstick. “Shit! What
time is it!” She yelled out, scrambling to find a phone, or a clock or something. David quirked one
full brow at her, wondering what her deal was, and taking another sip of his drink.
It was 11:47, almost midnight, it turned out. And with that thought, something clicked in his brain, and he realized. It was almost midnight… almost Wednesday. Stevie’s bet had been placed on Tuesday. Shit, he thought, as he prepared himself for Stevie to employ whatever her hail mary would be. One last-ditched attempt to get them to kiss or admit they’re dating. And she only had 13 minutes left, so whatever she did, he knew it was going to be desperate and very un-subtle.

“I’ve got one more game!” She announced, and people started to move towards her side of the room, crowding around, laughing and waiting for whatever was next. But David already knew. They’d already played spin the bottle and seven minutes in heaven. There was only one left to complete the “immature party games to make your friend do something they don’t want to do” trifecta. He bit his lip, and waited for it. “Truth of Dare!” She finally shouted. And there it was.

The room obviously was on board with this game, the dozen-or-so drunken freshmen more than willing to embarrass themselves and see their friends embarrassed all in the name of good fun. David also knew that everyone in this room knew about the bet to out he and Patrick’s relationship, and they’d all support whatever evil plan she had in store for them.

David glanced at his phone. 11:49. She was running out of time.

“Okay, first victim!” She shouted, and pretended to look around the crowd, choosing. But David knew she already had a ‘victim’ in mind. He just didn’t know what she had in store for him. Stevie had a pretty devious mind, it was one of the things he loved most about her. He just preferred when it was pointed in the direction of other people, so he could watch in amusement, rather than be the target of her evil machinations. He couldn’t wait for all of this to be over.

“Let me guess…” David muttered quietly to himself. Or, he thought he did. Because Stevie’s eyes shot right to him, and there was that evil smile and twinkle in her eye.

“David.” She said, and her voice sent a chill down David’s drunken spine. He wasn’t surprised, but he still felt nervous, because he didn’t know what to expect, how this was going to play out. But he knew what he had to do was act confident. So he threw one sassy hand on a hip and shot her a raised brow with pursed lips. “Truth--” She started, putting a lot of emphasis on the word, and locking her eyes with his. “Or Dare?” She finished, and he quirked a smile.

There was no way he was dumb enough to pick truth, but he was almost equally afraid of what she might dare him to do. Because one thing David always did was follow through on a dare. If it was to kiss Patrick, though, he didn’t know what he’d do. He thought he would probably do it, because it wouldn’t prove anything. It would only prove that they went through with a dare. As long as they kept the kiss pretty short and tame, and went back to acting like friends again… he found himself suddenly hoping she would dare him to kiss Patrick, because holy God, did he need a kiss.
David took a deep breath, and stepped forward. “Dare.” He replied, as confidently as he could, and waited with a rapidly beating heart for her to dish out his sentence. He questioned his choice, however, when his answer brought about a predatory smile on her pretty, lipstick-smeared face.

“Are you sure?” She asked, and honestly? David wasn’t sure. But he acted like he was, and nodded confidently.

“Do your worst, I’ve got nothing to hide.” He said, and felt Patrick tense beside him.

“Alright, so be it.” She replied, and he stood up tall as he waited for her to continue. “I dare you to…” She was saying each word slowly, drawing them out, torturing him. “Give a lap dance.” She said, and David felt his blood turn cold for a second, as what she said sunk in. She’d paused, for dramatic effect. It was working. He tried to keep his confident air, but he knew it was shattering around him. “To…” She stalled again. She was killing him! He finished for her.

But she didn’t say Patrick. With a wicked grin, she finally finished her dare. “Ted!” She said, and David’s eyes went wide. Somewhere to his right, Ted laughed, fully on board with the idea, apparently.

“Oh ya, big guy!” He called out, smiling widely and laughing. David had frozen stiff, his brain in full shut-down mode. Around him, people were moving out of the way, and an armless rolling computer chair was brought over into the middle of the room. David thought. And he couldn’t help it, he glanced worriedly over at Patrick. Who looked… wrecked.

“What’s looking at him for?” Stevie asked accusingly, having caught their exchange, and David turned to glare at her. “You have any reason you wouldn’t want to give Ted a lap dance, David? Is there someone else you would have preferred I’d chosen?” She asked, her intent as clear as day, not even trying to hide it anymore. He furrowed his brow and wrinkled his nose as he scowled at her for a moment, before he forced the unpleasantness from his features. Shit like that would give you wrinkles, anyways.

“Nope, no reason at all. Bring it on.” He said, sounding much more confident than he felt, and with one last look at a shell-shocked Patrick, he strode over to where Ted was now waiting for him in the chair in the center of the room. As he saw the way Ted was smiling, open and ready to receive his lap dance, David couldn’t help but smile back at him. And in his mind, a memory flashed, of just a few minutes earlier. How jealous he’d been, when Patrick had hugged Ted. And how much hard David had gotten afterward, with a possessive need to remind Patrick who his boyfriend was. Suddenly, a plan was forming. Maybe not the nicest plan, considering it involved working Patrick
up into a jealous lather. But a plan, nonetheless.

Behind him, he heard Stevie speak. “You okay there, Patrick?” She asked, and David held his breath, waiting for the answer. “You a little jealous I picked Ted and not you?” She added, needling him further.

“Fuck off, Stevie, and start the music.” Patrick replied, and David couldn’t see him, but he knew that Patrick was glaring at Stevie. He could hear it in his voice, Patrick was mad. And that was good, made David feel more confident. Because a mad Patrick wouldn’t want to give Stevie the satisfaction of seeing him break up the lap dance in a jealous fit. A mad Patrick would stand there, biting his lip, watching the whole thing.

And then, hopefully, a mad Patrick would drag David back to their room and make out with him with a reckless abandon, afterward. Because the second midnight hit, the second Tuesday was over, David was out of here. And so was Patrick. And then it would just be one more day. One more day.

A few seconds passed, and then the opening beats of a familiar song blasted over the room. Pony, by Ginuine. And David couldn’t help it, he smiled. This was a good song for a lap dance. And Patrick was going to get a show.

David wanted it to be good enough, that Patrick would ask for a private encore, later.

And so he started to move.

Patrick didn’t really know what happened to the 30 seconds or so after Stevie had announced the name ‘Ted’ instead of his own. He must have blacked out, or gone into some sort of fugue state, he supposed. His body, completely shut down with jealousy and frustration. He was so angry at Stevie now, he almost didn’t know what to do with himself. He felt alcohol and rage-fuelled adrenaline coursing through his bloodstream, and all he wanted to do was beat his chest, grab David’s arm, and yank him away from all these people. Go pin him to a wall somewhere and suck a mark into his throat where everyone could see it.
What was wrong with him? A part of him, a distant part, was alarmed at this entirely new side of himself rearing up so forcefully. Patrick wasn’t jealous or possessive … was he? His current reaction would suggest the contrary.

A lot happened in the instant that followed Patrick waking back up to the party, and what was going on around him. His brain raced, as he processed the situation. Stevie was deviously trying to prove they were dating by daring David to give Ted a lap dance. David had to say yes, or lose the bet. And if he lost, Stevie would win.

He had a decision to make. He could let his jealousy win, he could stop the dance and lose the bet, but at least he wasn’t going to have to see whatever he was about to see. But doing that would mean that Stevie would win, and all of a sudden, that just seemed unacceptable. So his other option was to grin and bear it, basically. Deny Stevie her win by acting cool and letting it play out.

He made his decision. Stevie could not win. Not after this dirty move.

“You okay over there Patrick?” Stevie asked, snapping him out of his thoughts. He threw her his deepest scowl, letting her know he did not appreciate this. But wordlessly, she gave him her reply in the way her smile went up on one side and she just shrugged. You can back down any time you want and I’ll call this off, the look said.

“Fuck off, Stevie, and start the music.” He said, rising to the bet, draining the rest of his drink in one go, and then turning to watch. His stomach turned nervously, and yet… there was some interest, down below, too. Like his dick was confused, and didn’t know that he wasn’t supposed to like this. That having to see his secret boyfriend give a lapdance to a ripped and admittedly pretty gorgeous (and shirtless!) guy was not a good thing. This was not supposed to be doing things for him, because of how insanely jealous he also felt. And he did, he burned with jealousy, a fire so hot he thought he might smolder to ashes at any second.

And yet, as Pony started, and he watched David lay one hand on Ted’s shoulder, his hips winding around, Patrick’s eyes on his ass… Patrick’s dick didn’t seem to know how jealous Patrick’s heart was. All Patrick’s dick seemed to care about was switching places with Ted, and having David move like that for him.

The dance was the hottest, but most painfully torturous four minutes and thirty four seconds of Patrick’s life. He thought he might burst from the conflicting feelings inside himself, and having to try to control his reactions as it all happened. Once he’d finished his drink, he’d shoved both hands in his pockets so he could clench his fists in hiding.
David was an adonis.

Watching him move like that was an epiphany. If he hadn’t already realized he was gay before this (which he definitely had), this would have been all he’d needed for a full-on awakening. David moved around Ted seductively, with a rhythm and deliberateness that Patrick hadn’t been expecting. He touched Ted, but only in the most appropriate places. Shoulders, knees, once running his hand through his hair. Ted was loving it. His smile split his face, and Patrick could tell that he was purposefully holding back hands that wanted to touch David, to hold his hips as they wound and ground in the air. And Ted wasn’t even gay, but that’s just how good David’s dance was.

Several times throughout the song, as he danced, David’s eye had caught Patrick’s. And every time it happened, Patrick’s body had responded with a rush of blood to his cock and achy need in his loins. Fuck he wanted David. He was drunk, it was true, and maybe this wasn’t the best time to be making decisions like that. But he wanted him. He couldn’t help what his body was demanding.

How could anyone watch that dance, and not want David Rose? As the thought crossed his mind, a jealous wave crashed over him and he looked around and saw all the people watching. He’s mine! He wanted to shout, but kept it together, for David’s sake.

At long last, it was over, and somehow, Patrick had survived. When he was done, David had casually walked back over, smirking in a very self-satisfied way to a chorus of catcalls and whistles, laughs and cheers. When he got to them, he struck a pose, hand on hip, and lifted one dramatic brow at Stevie. “You like the show?” He asked, and several people behind him laughed. Patrick looked at Stevie, and she looked extremely frustrated. And for the first time since the dare, Patrick smiled. He couldn’t help it… Stevie had lost. This thought had tremendous healing power, he found, as he thought that no matter what happened now, at least she wouldn’t win the big pot.

Then it was David’s turn to choose someone, and he selected Twyla. He dared her and ‘Matt’ to kiss for at least twenty seconds, a request that neither her, nor Mutt seemed too upset about at all. As soon as they’d begun, Patrick felt a hand on his arm. It was David, and he looked at him with dark, demanding eyes. Patrick swallowed and nodded his head, sharply, before he allowed himself to be quietly pulled out the door and across the hall. As quickly and quietly as they could, they retreated into their quiet, dark, private room. Where they could be alone. The distraction of the kiss had given them the perfect cover.

As he moved, Patrick felt a fire burn through him, like the ones that would rip through the forests and prairies every summer and fall, when there wasn’t enough rain. His jealousy-fueled lust burned and consumed, spreading with every step in the short distance between rooms. And by the time their door closed behind them, he was completely engulfed with white hot flaming need.
He didn’t know what day of the week it was anymore, he didn’t care. He didn’t care about some arbitrary day they’d chosen to take things to the next level, either. His body required David, right now. There wasn’t any argument to be had, and Patrick in his intoxicated state wasn’t in any place to argue. The second the door was closed behind them, Patrick reached for the lock with one hand, and pushed David back against the door with the other.

“Oh--” David said, as much of a noise as it was a word, just startled out of him. But he didn’t have much time for any followup questions, because Patrick’s lips were on his then, and all that was left was molten-hot passion.

Patrick kissed with a fervent desperation, like stopping would mean certain death. And wouldn’t it? He thought he might, as his tongue delved ever further into David’s mouth, his palms pressing his shoulders back against the door, his hips holding him in place, grinding into him with a desirous intent. Better not to risk it and keep going.

David moaned into his mouth, and Patrick moaned back, leaning onto his one hand against David, so the other could explore. He groped at his arm, his chest, his sides, dipping up and under David’s black cashmere sweater to revel in the feel of his warm skin. All the while, Patrick’s hips bucked of their own accord, pushing himself against the impressive hard length in David’s pants again and again, with an unrelenting rhythm he was no more powerful to stop than he was to stop the passage of time.

Patrick was drunk. He was very drunk. But he also knew what he was doing. What he wanted. They were only two days away from Friday now, and he really didn’t see what difference two days would make. He wanted David. He needed him. He was going to have him.

David seemed into it, and that made Patrick happier than he knew how to process. “David,” he gasped as he ground himself against him, his hand kneading the soft flesh of David’s ass, slowly moving from back, to hip, to front--

“Hey, hey.” He heard David say, twisting away from Patrick just a little. Patrick continued for another second or two, before David’s words made their way to his brain, and hen he pulled back, taking the opportunity to catch his breath.

“You okay?” Patrick asked, just wanting to make sure. David being okay was basically the only thing that mattered to Patrick anymore, so the answer was important. David smiled radiantly in return, biting his lip in a vain attempt to hold it back, and he nodded.

“Mmhmm, yeah. Very. It’s just--”
“What?” Patrick asked, placing his palm over David’s cheek, brushing his cheekbone with his thumb, and searching his eyes for answers. Through the haze in his brain, Patrick tried to survey what he saw on David’s face: excitement, lust, attraction, happiness, frustration, anxiety. He liked a lot of what he was seeing, but he didn’t like those last two things. He felt his brows knit in concern.

“It’s just, you said no hands, and we’re so close to Friday. And last time we did this you stopped us, and if you keep going, I’m not going to be able to stop myself. So maybe we shouldn’t…” David replied, the words falling out of him, one after the other, far too fast and accompanied by a very worried look on his face.

Patrick did his best to listen, to share David’s concern, he really did. He knew the whole waiting thing had been his idea to start with. He knew he’d gotten himself, themselves, into this all to begin with. But no part of himself could understand the need to wait at this moment. They’d gotten close enough. And Patrick was beyond things like want, at this point. Now, he was operating purely on needs. And he needed David.

“David…” He said, pulling back to search David’s eye’s once more. When David was gazing back at him, Patrick added a small and desperate “please.”

For a long second, David just looked at Patrick, and he looked like he was thinking. And then decision firmed on his face, and suddenly Patrick was being whirled around and pushed back against the door himself, their positions all at once reversed. It had come about so quickly, he hadn’t really known what was happening until it happened. And then David was gathering Patrick’s hands up, and pinning them above his head by the wrists with one arm, the other arm free to roam up and down Patrick’s chest. And it did. And Patrick liked it.

“Fine.” David said, at last. He seemed out of breath, like he was turned on almost beyond control. But David was holding it together. Because Patrick had asked him to. Fuck, Patrick loved this guy. Like, really loved him. In a ’would-sacrifice-almost anything to make him happy’ sort of way. “But no hands.” David added forcefully, staring right into Patrick’s eyes, before dipping in for a quick but passionate kiss, and then pulling back. “We’re too fucking close, I have to see this one through.” He added, and Patrick could tell how important this was to David. He nodded his agreement, desperate for whatever David would allow.

“Yes.” Patrick agreed on a deep exhale, tossing his head back to expose his throat for David to kiss. David latched on almost instantly, kissing and sucking, licking and nipping, until Patrick was writhing with wanton need and abandon, his wrists still pinned above his head and his hips desperately bucking in search of friction and sensation.
And then he felt David’s hips very purposefully press forward, rolling in a lazy circle, arching his back forward before pulling back. It was heavenly, and elicited a large groan from Patrick, which made David smile into his assault on Patrick’s neck.

“Fuck, David.” Patrick said, as he did it again, and David pulled his head back to look at him. His eyes were dark, lustful, but also full of care and concern and obvious happiness, Patrick felt his heart swell just looking at him, and leaned forward for another kiss, needing the connection.

“Mmm…” David hummed into the kiss, never stopping the circular grinding motion of his pelvis, never easing up on his hold of Patrick’s wrists above his head. Which, Patrick was learning, was an incredibly huge turn-on for him. He didn’t see it coming, either, because it’s not something he’d have ever thought of before. Being held down by Rachel? Unappealing. Being held down while David touched his body? Now that did things for him. Major things.

In fact, he was so turned on, he didn’t think he was going to last much longer. Patrick’s orgasm had been steadily building in the pit of his belly, a delicious aching pull from right down in his balls, as he tried to hold it off for as long as he could. The closer he got to release, the wilder and more unrestrained he became, and thoughts ceased altogether.

“Show me how you’ll fuck me, David. I want you so bad--” Patrick said without thinking, not regretting a word of it. Not capable of regret, not at that moment. David sucked in a hissing breath as Patrick’s words took him by surprise.

“Fuck, Patrick.” He breathed, before pulling back to stare into his eyes for a second. It looked like he was deciding something, and then rolled his eyes back, tossing his head back, and bit his lip to hold back a smile. “Fuck!” He shouted, his voice tinged with laughter, and then he was nodding. “Yeah, okay.” He said, like he was trying to convince himself.

Then he eased off the pressure on Patrick’s wrists and released his arms, only to pull his light blue long-sleeved henley over his head in one swift motion, his other hand dexterously undoing the top button to Patrick’s jeans. When the shirt was off, David was able to use both hands, and had Patrick’s pants off in flash. In a matter of maybe three seconds total, Patrick had been undressed down to his boxers, which were fully tented and wet from his leaking cock.

For a second, he just stood there, his back still to their dorm room door, and David just looked at him greedily. “On the bed. Your bed, this could get messy, and my sheets are--”

“Egyptian cotton.” Patrick finished for him, scrambling into his bed and making room for David, who looked very pleased that Patrick knew that.
“Stop trying to turn me on, you’ve already got me in bed.” David laughed as he carefully removed his sweater, and then wiggled out of his grey skinny jeans.

“Not yet I don’t.” Patrick growled, growing impatient and cold, all alone on his bed. “C’mere and show me what you’re gonna do to me.” He added, more bold than he’d ever been before in life. But he supposed that’s just what David did to him. For him. He made Patrick bold. And that felt like a good thing.

“Fuck, okay, yeah.” David said, nodding his agreement, and scrambling forward onto the bed the second he’d removed himself of his pants and socks. He looked absolutely fucking delicious in his tight grey boxer-briefs that probably cost more than Patrick’s entire outfit tonight had cost together. And all Patrick could think about was taking them off. He reached for him, for that tight package he coveted so much, but David smacked his hands away and gathered up his wrists again, pinning them down above his head. “No hands!” He said, his voice low and forceful, the vibrations sending a shiver right down to Patrick’s cock, and he bucked his hips reflexively and struggled tentatively against David’s hold, testing him. He held him firm. Good, Patrick thought. Patrick definitely liked being held down.

“Show me, David.” Patrick begged, knowing the words came out whiny but honestly having no control over it. He needed this. After watching David dance like he had for Ted, Patrick needed to feel like he was David’s and David was his again. And if David wouldn’t actually fuck him right now, this was the next best thing.

David pressed down on Patrick’s wrists with one hand, his other anchoring himself so he could adjust into just the right place. Patrick was on his back, hands above his head, and his legs were spread, David crouching between them. For a long second, David just stayed there, not touching Patrick, and just looking down at him, watching his hips buck desperately, trying to find some contact or friction. “Please, David.” Patrick whined, and David smiled and looked up at him. Those must have been the magic words, because after that, he finally started to move.

He lined up their lengths, just the thin material of their boxers separating them, and began to slowly and luxuriously slide them against each other. He rolled his hips, slowly building up a rhythm, and methodically made Patrick fall to pieces beneath him.

Patrick moaned and writhed, testing David’s grip on his wrists and loving that he didn’t let go. David’s other hand explored Patrick’s body, tweaking nipples, gliding over sweaty oversensitized skin, pressing down on his hip and holding him even more firmly in place. All the while, his own hips continued their movements, thrust after thrust, each one shooting fireworks behind Patrick’s eyelids. He’d never experienced anything this good before, and he’d had actual sex. Every pleasure centre in his brain was alight, and all Patrick could think of as he started to spiral down the descent
towards release, was how much he couldn’t wait for this to be real. For David to fuck him for real.

With every dry thrust, Patrick pretended it was the actual thing, pretended David was inside him. Imagined how it would feel. It was all too much, and it was a miracle he’d even lasted this long. Although, he supposed he could thank the small fortune in alcohol he’d drank that night for that. But at long last, his orgasm was imminent. And he must have been giving some signals, because David seemed to understand, and he picked up his pace, possibly trying to bring himself to the edge as well to join him.

“Don’t stop.” Patrick panted, unnecessarily, because he knew David wasn’t stopping, not then, hopefully not ever. “So good.” Patrick said, also very unnecessarily. Because David had eyes, he could see how much Patrick was liking it. Or, Patrick hoped he could. Because he was really liking it.

A few more thrusts, and Patrick was coming in his Jockeys, crying David’s name, his voice strained and exultant. Not long later, David joined him, whispering “fuck, Patrick,” as he spilled over the edge of his own climax.

David’s body went limp for a couple seconds, his full weight collapsed on top of Patrick. And then he let go of Patrick’s wrists, and Patrick immediately wrapped his arms around him. Pulling him in close, kissing the crook of his neck and shoulder. Prying David’s head up so he could capture his lips with his own.

“Mmm…” David hummed, smiling into their kiss, and Patrick couldn’t help his grin in return.

“Yeah.” Patrick agreed, and pulled David in to rest his head on Patrick’s arm, and to tuck in as close as he could. They were quiet after that, laying together in comfortable silence for several moments, before Patrick couldn’t help himself. “Thanks, for that.” He said, and then David twisted so he could look up at him quizzically.

“For what?” David asked, his smile twisting to the side as he tried to control it. Patrick smiled bashfully, ducking his head a little and looking away, but returning the eye contact shortly after. He shook his head, still a little in disbelief over what had just happened. David had just dry-fucked him to completion on his bed. Sure, there were more elegant, more romantic ways to describe it. But Patrick had been drinking all night, and that was about as elegant as his brain got, at that point. He laughed, thinking about how David had just basically popped his gay cherry, and he hadn’t even used his hands. “What?” David asked again, laughing himself along with Patrick.

“For, I dunno, that. For making that happen for us.” Patrick replied a little awkwardly, not really
knowing how to put what he was feeling into words. He was definitely not at his most eloquent, either, after a night of drinking. But for some reason, he thought if he just looked into David’s eyes, that he’d understand what he meant. How much this one act had meant to him, and how much he had needed it. Like a bone-deep need that couldn’t have been ignored. And David had taken care of him. He’d given Patrick everything he needed, and he’d somehow done it without breaking his word on the hands. David was good.

He smiled back at Patrick, a little like he didn’t believe he was real, shaking his head in disbelief. “Well I’m nothing if not a generous lover.” He replied, and Patrick laughed.

“That’s why I like you so much, your generous heart.” He replied, pulling David’s head in and kissing the top of it, taking a deep breath of David’s apricot shampoo while he was at it.

“Would you say I’m a nice person?” He asked, and Patrick chuckled.

“You’re a very generous person, David.” He replied, pulling David in again and silencing his groan with a kiss.

“Okay but tomorrow is Thursday, and we don’t have a plan yet.” David pressed, hesitating at the door. He’d needed to leave for class five minutes ago, but somehow, when Patrick was around, he could never seem to make it to class on time. It was okay, it was a big lecture, he could sneak in the back, likely unnoticed. It’s not like his teacher knew his name anyways. Besides, this was important. Patrick was hiding something from him, and for some reason, he didn’t want to share with the class.

“I told you, I have a plan.” Patrick replied, unconcerned, sitting on his desk chair and casually strumming on his guitar. He’d been playing a little bit, here or there, a lot more recently. Since they’d gotten together. David thought maybe he played it when he was happy, and that thought set a warm glow inside him. He smiled to spite himself, before he realized he was trying to dig for information.

“Okay, but shouldn’t I know what the plan is?” He pressed, and Patrick just smiled up at him.
“Gimme a kiss, you’re gonna be late.” He said, ignoring him, and David rolled his eyes, but couldn’t stop the smile that grew anyways.

“You’re so annoying.” He complained, as he moved back across the room and leaned over Patrick’s guitar to kiss him where he sat, softly and sweetly. Patrick smiled into the kiss, hummed, and closed his eyes. They were still closed when David pulled back, a wide closed mouth smile giving him the look of someone in utter bliss. It made David’s heart swell, and for a second, he almost forgot what they were talking about.

“Mm, and you’re so adorable when you’re annoyed.” Patrick replied, finally, and David rolled his eyes.

“Fine, don’t tell me.” He huffed, and Patrick chuckled, then leaned forward and picked a few notes with his nimble fingers. They rang clearly and harmoniously throughout the room.

“Cool, I wasn’t going to anyways.” He replied, looking up with an infuriating grin that David really just wanted to kiss off his face. He furrowed his brow at his maddening yet irresistible boyfriend.

“Okay, be like that.” He said, and rolled his eyes when he saw the cocky little wink Patrick shot him, spinning around and exiting as dramatically as he was capable.

*Fine, Patrick could keep his secrets.*

The next day, David woke up early like a kid on Christmas morning. He couldn’t help it, he couldn’t sleep. He was too excited. It was Thursday! They’d made it! Not only were they going to finally be able to go public with their relationship, but they’d be winning the pot as well. The pot that David now knew actually sat at $380. How Stevie had convinced thirty-eight people to part with ten bucks for such a stupid bet, he’d never know. But he did know that he and Patrick were going to profit a cool $330 after all was said and done, and he practically salivated at all the things they could do with that money. Maybe they could finally go to that fancy cocktail bar downtown that he’d been eyeing…
“Patrick, Patrick wake up!” David whispered loudly, as he twisted around from his position as little spoon and tried to shake his boyfriend awake. It wasn’t the gentlest journey into consciousness, and it had looked like he’d been sleeping pretty peacefully, but it couldn’t be helped. David was excited.

“Mrrarrrghhh,” Patrick said, a growl or moan of resistance, as he tried to push his face into his pillow to block out the light. David laughed, shaking his head. Patrick was up before him almost a hundred percent of the time. He had no idea that he’d be so grumpy like this, when he just woke up. It was an adorable little character flaw that just made David fall even harder for him.

“Patrick, come onnn, it’s Thursday!” David whined, trying to pull at his pillow while simultaneously pushing Patrick’s shoulder to get him to roll over onto his back. But Patrick latched onto his pillow and wouldn’t let go. When David finally gave up and laid back down, Parick shifted to curl up against him, his head on his shoulder, and arm thrown over his chest and a leg over his thighs. He made a very contented noise as he did so, and David couldn’t help but smile.

“Something special s’posed to happen on Thursday?” Patrick asked, mumbling against the bare skin of David’s chest, still half asleep and yet still teasing him. David rolled his eyes, shook his head, and smiled.

“Can we go tell Stevie now?” David asked, and he felt Patrick chuckle softly against him.

“No.”

“But it’s Thursday.” David pouted, and Patrick rolled back a bit, attempting to open his eyes and squinting against the light, so he could look at David.

“You’ve gotta wait til tonight, can you do that for me?” He asked, and David felt his eyes go wide. *Tonight?*

“That is tantamount to torture.” He replied, not thinking he was exaggerating or overreacting even a bit. Patrick smiled and chuckled, and placed his head back onto David’s shoulder, pulling him tight.

“Hmm, but I didn’t *think* I was into that sort of thing, and yet seeing you whine like this is doing things for me…” Patrick said, teasing, but placing sexy kisses against David’s chest. “Maybe I’m discovering a new kink…”
“Rude.” David replied, and tried not to keen into the kisses too much, attempting to hold out and pretend to be mad for as long as possible. His resolve was already slipping.

“Mmm, you’re so concerned about Thursday, but what I want to know is if it’s Friday yet…” Patrick said, his voice silky and seductive, and David felt his hand slide down his chest, past his belly button, and-- David slapped it away.

“Excuse you, but if I have to wait until tonight, you have to wait until tomorrow.” He felt Patrick laugh against his chest, and slide his hand back up high enough to tweak a nipple.

“You drive a hard bargain, David Rose. But fair is fair.” He said, before dipping his head down and capturing one of David’s nipples with his mouth and sucking sharply, before trapping the hardening nub lightly between his teeth. David had never gotten so hard, so fast. He sucked in a breath of air between his teeth as he absorbed the pleasurable pain. “Luckily, I know of a few other fun ways to pass the time that aren’t against the rules…” Patrick added. And okay, David could definitely get on board with that.

Just, no hands.

“Patrick, what are we doing here? Are you going to perform?” Stevie asked, as she observed the sign at the door of the Ottonabee lecture hall where David normally had his Psychology lectures on Wednesday afternoons. It had amphitheatre seating and a big stage, he knew it was often used for performances, when it wasn’t used for class. Today, it was apparently being used to host a ‘Talent Show’ that Patrick hadn’t told any of them about.

“Ooh! What’s your talent?” Twyla asked excitedly from David’s other side. Mutt was with her, and Jenny with Stevie, not to mention Ted and Miguel, so their crowd was a little larger than normal. “Is it ventriloquism? I love ventriloquist acts.” She continued, and David couldn’t help laughing, despite his current concerns re: the talent show.

“Yeah, Twy, he’s got a guitar-shaped ventriloquist dummy in that guitar case. You solved it.” He replied, dryly, and feeling a little bad about it as he did. He’d been slightly bitchy all day. Probably because he was now on hour ten of not being able to tell his friends about his relationship with Patrick, despite it finally being Thursday. And now they were at some stupid talent show, where
David was probably going to have to listen to *beat poetry*, or watch some sort of ungodly improv troupe perform, and -- *Oh God*, what if they tried to force the audience to participate, what if-- okay, he was spiraling. And all because he knew he'd have to wait at least another couple hours to tell them about their relationship now, whenever this stupid talent show was over.

His only consolation was that Patrick couldn’t keep pushing this back forever. At midnight, it would cease to be Thursday, and they would have lost their bet. So they *had* to tell them before then. David just kept telling himself that Patrick had a plan. He said he had a plan, at least. So David tried to keep it together and have a little faith. But it was *hard*. David had the best boyfriend in the entire world, and he wanted everyone to know it. It was honestly so unfair of the universe, the way David had finally been given someone special, someone *his*, but he couldn’t tell anyone about it.

Okay, maybe that last part wasn’t the universe’s fault, as much as it was his own fault for making the bet in the first place, and for his stubbornness and unwillingness to lose fifty dollars. But mostly, it was about not letting Stevie win. He couldn’t *wait* to see the look on her face…

“I’m playing a song, Twy.” Patrick replied, kindly and patiently, and received a beaming smile from their stunning friend in return. They’d all heard Patrick sing, on many occasions, *especially* after a couple drinks. Someone was always requesting he get his guitar and play them a song. David had been mortified the first time, but he knew by now how talented Patrick was, so he was only a *little* bit nervous to find out that he’d be playing in front of a whole room full of people.

And by the time the show started, the room was *full*. They’d found seats near the front, but as the lights dimmed, the house, which sat 200, was packed. David looked around nervously, as the first acts went up. The first actually *was* beat poetry, although they’d done it with a distinctly hip hop flare, and David had found himself moderately enjoying it, to his great surprise. The second act was not nearly as good, a juggler that kept dropping things, and David was starting to get bored, until he noticed Patrick beside him squirming in his seat. With one questioning look, Patrick mouthed “I’m next”, and David gave him an encouraging smile.

Just because *David* had second-hand embarrassment and nervousness for Patrick, didn’t mean that *Patrick* had to know that. He wanted to be a supportive boyfriend. God, he still couldn’t get over that. *Boyfriend*. It still didn’t quite feel real, although with every passing day, David found himself believing it more and more. For so long he had just not thought of himself as boyfriend-material, so it was just hard to reconcile this new reality, one where he had someone as amazing as *Patrick* wanting to call him that. Wanting him all for himself.

It just didn’t feel real. And yet it was.

Patrick was a little more nervous than David would have expected, considering he signed himself
up for this in the first place, so he had to have some sort of confidence, right? He placed a reassuring hand on his knee, to still it from bouncing anxiously. “You okay?” David asked, leaning over and speaking quietly, hoping that only Patrick could hear.

“Will be, real soon.” Patrick answered enigmatically, before he placed his hand over David’s, squeezed, and then got up and left, disappearing off into the backstage area. He’d already gone back there, when they’d arrived early, to soundcheck his guitar and get it hooked up to the mic. David had saved him a seat and he’d snuck out to join them right before the first act, when there was nothing left for him to do.

“Do you know what he’s playing?” Stevie leaned forward and whispered loudly over at David.

“I didn’t even know about this talent show until we got here.” David replied, honestly. He was as confused by this as she was. Stevie seemed to believe him, because the ‘this is crazy’ look she gave him was conspiratorial, instead of suspicious.

“Well I, for one, think it’s awesome!” Ted said from between them, his enthusiasm completely genuine.

“Yeah, Patrick’s so good, he’s totally going to win.” Twyla cut in, and David pulled a face.

“There are *winners*? Does that mean we have to stay until the *end*? ” He asked, horrified. What time would this thing wrap up? How much time would they have left to come out to Stevie? It was already pushing 9pm… But before David could get an answer, Patrick was being announced.

“And up next we have a first-year student from Lady Eaton College, ladies and gentlemen let’s give it up for…” The MC paused to check a card in his hand. “Patrick Brewwwwwer!”

David’s heart began to flutter as he watched Patrick nervously take the stage. Well, nervous might not be the word. Cautiously? Tentatively? Trepidatiously? Whatever the word was, Patrick approached the microphone with *that* kind of energy. A sort of nervous excitement that David didn’t quite understand. If this was such a big deal to him, if he was so nervous or excited, why hadn’t David known about this? He didn’t think they’d *had* secrets from each other, so he was doing his very best not to read too much into that, as he watched Patrick strum a chord, pluck a few notes, and then clear his throat.

“Hey, hi, um, hi everyone.” Patrick said into the mic, his voice low, like he was trying not to talk
too loudly. The room clapped politely for him, their energy a little down after the last dud of an act. David bit his lip nervously and clapped along with the crowd, trying not to be sick with whatever nervous energy was striking him at that moment. It’s not like David thought Patrick was going to be bad, so he didn’t really know what it was. He supposed it was just one thing, to play for a crowd of eight or nine, in a college dorm room, and it was another entirely when microphones and packed 200-head houses were involved.

David told himself it was *that*, and not the *weird* energy he’d been picking up from Patrick since they’d arrived here, that had him so anxious. But whatever it was, the time for conjecture and self reflection were over. Patrick was *up there*. And all that was left for David now was to sit back and *watch*.

“This, uh, this is a little song I’ve been working on for a while.” Patrick said, his voice still low and quiet, but carrying, and he strummed his guitar once. “And it’s dedicated to the best roommate a guy could ask for.” He added, more confidently, and shot a smile directly at David, who thought he might melt on the spot. His cheeks hurt, he was smiling so hard, both out of genuine happiness and also embarrassment. Not that he was embarrassed of Patrick in any way. Just that he knew 199 pairs of eyes were probably aimed directly at that moment, and he was very aware of being the centre of attention.

Normally, he’d hate it. And yet, with the way Patrick was looking at him from that stage, ignoring the rest of the people like they weren’t even there. Speaking directly to David… he couldn’t find the strength to care. *Let them look*, he thought.

And then Patrick began to play.

At first, David couldn’t quite pick out what the song was. Patrick had obviously composed his own arrangement, soft and soulful, and with every note, it was like Patrick was playing directly on David’s heartstrings.

*“I’m, I’m comin’ out.*

*Out, I’m comin’ out.*

*I’m coming out.*"

David was pretty sure his heart stopped beating entirely. *Was that…?*
“Want the whole world to know I’m coming out and got to let it show,
I’m comin’ out.

Want the whole world to know I’m coming out and got to let it show,”

Holy. Fucking. Shit. It was that song. I’m Coming Out, by Diana Ross. David felt his jaw go slack and his eyes widen as the realization hit him. And suddenly Patrick insisting he “had a plan” made so much more sense.

Patrick was coming out.

David couldn’t help it, he shot a shellshocked look over at Stevie, and found her staring up at Patrick with much the same expression on her face, realization obviously hitting her as well. David didn’t spare the time to glance at anyone else, he needed to be looking at Patrick, soaking this moment in and cataloguing it to memory, to be looked back on for the rest of his life. He didn’t want to forget a thing. Should he be taping this? His phone burned in his pocket, tempting him to commemorate the moment on video, but he decided to leave it there, and live it instead.

“The time’s come for me, I’m breakin’ outta this shell,
I have to shout that,
I’m
Coming
Out.”

When Patrick finished shortly after, the entire room erupted into applause. Patrick had been amazing, of course. His voice, his playing, his brand new arrangement on a classic gay club-anthem.

But David didn’t really care about any of that, because Patrick was out. And he was staring down at David with the most adoring expression that David had ever seen directed towards himself. He bit his lip, trying to get a hold on the intense emotions filling him at that moment.

“Thank you, thank you, everyone.” Patrick said, waving shyly at the crowd. He tore his eyes from David’s just for a second to look around the room in acknowledgement. “As you may have
guessed, I may have a little bit of a thing for my roommate.” His eyes returned to David, who felt
pinned in place by the overwhelming emotions of the moment. He felt tears sting his eyes and he
laughed out of pure joy.

“And David?” Patrick asked from the stage, looking directly at him, right into his soul, and when
David nodded, he smiled. “I’m coming out.” He finished, and with a wink to Stevie, his smile
widened, pulling his guitar strap over his head and placing the instrument on the ground. Then he
stepped forward and hopped right off the stage, moving quickly as he made his way over to David.

He didn’t pause or hesitate when he got there, and David was immediately pulled to his feet and
into a closed-mouth but passionate kiss. Patrick sighed against David’s lips, and David could
barely hold it together. He was crying, he was laughing. He was craughing, if such a word existed.
Which it didn’t. He was just so deliriously happy he was making up nonsense words. And all the
while, Patrick’s arms encircled him and held him tight. Holding him close like something precious
that he didn't want to get away.

And the crowd went wild.

There were shouts, wolf whistles, whoops of encouragement, and a deafening echoing applause
from everyone in the room, including Stevie. When they’d finally pulled apart, she had been the
first person David had looked to. And he didn’t know what he’d been expecting. Maybe a gloating
smirk over having won the $50 bet? An angry or frustrated look at having been left out of the loop
on this? But it wasn’t any of those things.

Stevie’s face was wet with tears, her eyes puffy and red, and yet she was smiling, and clapping, and
laughing. As he watched, she cupped her hands in front of her mouth and shouted something
encouraging at them that he couldn’t make out. David had never seen anyone look more joyously
happy before in his life. Although, if someone had gotten him a mirror right then, his own
reflection might have matched it. But seeing Stevie so obviously happy for them, seeing her drop
the game they’d been playing for the past couple weeks, and just be his best friend? It was about
the best thing for David’s heart at that moment, and he honestly just didn’t know if he could take it
anymore.

When Stevie saw David look back at her, she shot him a “why didn’t you tell me!?” smile, and
rolled her eyes, but then she shot him two very enthusiastic thumbs-up, and he couldn’t help but
laugh, before he turned his face in towards Patrick, hiding in the familiar safety of the crook
between his neck and shoulder as Patrick encircled him with his arms and held him tight.

David just needed a moment to recalibrate, to center himself, before facing this room full of wild,
cheering friends and strangers. He had never been happier, but it was an overwhelming sort of
happiness, and he just needed a minute. So he hid his face, his tears soaking into the absorbent
cotton of Patrick’s heather blue t-shirt.

And Patrick just held him, with tenderness and patience, for as long as he needed. And all the while, the room never stopped its applause.

Chapter End Notes

Kinda dying to hear what you guys thought <3

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this! As I'm at the start of an epic-in-scale journey with this fic, I'm hoping to hear what you think and if you want more! Pls let me know! Thanks for reading!!!

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