Encounters

by BlownAwayEveryday

Summary

It's lust at first sight when humble barman Jim Hutton rescues rock front man Freddie Mercury after a bar brawl breaks out at one of their gigs. Jim befriends the band members and
is whipped into their rise to fame from local student bars to world acclaim, falling in love with every side to Freddie from afar, as he works his way through a number of questionable relationships.

When Jim discovers a torrid secret in Freddie's past, he realises that although he may one day possess his body, he may never possess his heart....

Notes

Hi lovies,
Well here goes! It's the first chapter of my first attempt at something a little longer. I'm very much enjoying writing this, and I hope you enjoy the read. Let me know your thoughts and ideas :)


Encounters: Lust at first Sight

There was an almighty crash as a large amplifier hit the ground. The attention of the crowd was certainly grabbed now, if not already by the swelling number of men adding into the brawling melee. Three members of the band headed for exit left attempting to protect their instruments, while the singer leapt gracefully from the stage onto a nearby podium escaping the clutches of the baying crowd, but unfortunately marooning himself.

“Fucks sake!” Jim shouted to his bar mate Chris. These nights were always the same. Fill the Market Tavern with students and a rock band and this is what his night becomes….back to doorman duties instead of serving beer. Although he hated working security, he liked to keep his hand in. Life would be too quiet otherwise, and he hadn’t moved from Ireland to sit at home having a few pints and a read of the paper. Without the frenetic club scene, his life would be too mundane.

The student band nights always attract trouble. He lived in hope that he would one day work his shift, tap his feet to the music, and head off home at midnight.

That said, this band had been magnificent. They had really worked the crowd. The quality of sound was something else – a bit much for the venue – and while he couldn’t see the singer from his place behind the bar, he could certainly hear him. The crowd was flocking around the stage like starving geese - and he was throwing bread.

If only the drummer hadn’t decided to trash his kit at the end of the performance, the crowd might have remained under control. They were only kids. Jim had met one of them while they were setting up – John something – the electronics expert seemingly. He had to hand it to him, the lighting was great, but none of them looked strong enough to tip a drum set.

Jim clapped his large hands together loudly drawing attention to himself as he made his way through the warring rock fans like Moses parting the Red Sea. Most of the bloody noses were making their way to the door, but there were a tenacious few huddled around the podium. Jim made his way through, grabbing the collars of those who turned to him fists raised ready for battle, retreating when they realised they wouldn’t win.

It was then that Jim spotted the man on the podium. He was swinging around the pole with his eyes shut tightly, laughing disturbingly at those who tried to grab at him. Teasing and taunting. His body language was a tumble of contradictions – tense, poised to flee at a moment’s notice, but clinging on for his life. He was a tiny little thing. Unbelievably slim, with long black hair fluffy around his shoulders, not entirely dissimilar to Aladdin.

“Come on – on your way” shouted Jim. Deep voice rumbling in his chest. Irish accent becoming more pronounced as he tried to sound authoritative. Eventually he pushed his way through to the stranded singer, and had to double take. What could only be a stage costume clung to his dainty physique which was curvy and effeminate, cut so tight following every contour of his body. Every contour. Jim was left in no doubt the singer was very male. He tried to pull himself together, reminding himself that he was not one of the teenagers, and was supposed to be in command here. He held his hand out to the singer “Come on Rapunzel, let’s have you down from there.”

The singer giggled, but did not remove his hands from his eyes. “They all want to fuck me darling” he said. Accent clipped, beautifully spoken.

Jim could see why. There was eye popping goodness just inches from his face, and Jim felt heat run through him. When the singer did not make any attempt to remove his hands from his face, Jim became concerned.

“Are you hurt?” he asked

“Nope”, said the singer from behind his hands. “I abhor violence. Don’t get me wrong, I can throw a good punch, but people came here to have a good time, not hurt each other.”

Jim sniggered, the man was actually a princess. “Well, you can look now, it’s all over, and I think your mates are missing you”.

Slowly the singer removed his hands from the richest brown eyes Jim had ever seen. He thought he
saw fear in those eyes, but it disappeared in seconds, and could have been an illusion. Jim felt like
he’d been gut punched.
The beautiful eyes roamed around the room with an awe Jim hadn’t seen in an adult – ever.
“That was amazing” he squealed. “where are my boys? They left me!!” He pouted.
Jim wanted to take that lip between his teeth. “Come on down, I want you to have a drink with me.”
He couldn’t believe what he’d just said. Jim had never asked a man out in his life. He was usually
chased round by burly men himself.
He held his hands out to the singer who clutched his shoulders and leapt into his arms. He was
remarkably light to lift, warm, and smelled deliciously of something that resembled perfume.
Jim felt his shoulders being squeezed “I like my men big and strong” purred the singer fluttering
exceptionally long eye lashes.
Once set on his feet Jim could not bring himself to remove his hands, and held onto the singers hips.
“Well, you’re safe now” he said, looking into those beautiful eyes suddenly not knowing what to do
next.

A loud clatter drew everyone’s attention to the door as a young man ran across the stage and plopped
down beside the singer. Jim recognised the drummer, now shirtless, dripping with sweat as he flung
his arm around the singer pulling him into a faux choke hold.
“Freddie, you’re alive!” he said.
Freddie – cute name, cute man.
“Well of course I am alive darling, this lovely Irish man saved me from certain doom!” Jim rolled his
eyes. He was nothing if not dramatic.
Another very tall curly haired man appeared at Jim’s side, and thrust a hand out. “Hi, I’m Brian, very
pleased to meet you. Did you enjoy the show? I can see you have met Freddie, he’s something else
isn’t he? That’s Roger trying to throttle him by the way.” Roger raised his free hand in a wave.
Jim shook Brian’s hand warmly “Jim Hutton, pleased to meet you. I was very impressed. That is
some sound you guys make together. I hear a lot of bands with working here, some promising, some
not so, you guys are going places”.
“Awwww” squealed Freddie clapping his hands together.
John appeared at Brian’s elbow, nodded politely at Jim and started to whisper into Brian’s ear. Brian
shook Jim’s hand again as John pulled him away “Sorry mate, this is John, but we call him Deaky,
he’s our strong silent type. We have to pack up the rest of our gear now, but listen shall we head
back later, have a drink?”
Jim nodded, but felt the effect physically of Freddie being pulled away from him. He took one step
forward just to be near him for another minute. Just then another man pushed roughly between them
and slapped Freddie’s arse loudly as he passed. Every protective instinct screamed inside Jim, but his
feet were glued to the floor.
“Ooooh daddy, do it like you mean it!” shouted Freddie to the man as he winked back.
So much touching. Everyone was touching Freddie. Jim wanted to touch Freddie. He wanted to see
those eyes wide with desire. He wanted him gasping and aching under his touch. He wanted to hold
him down until his eyes rolled back in his head from the pleasure, and he couldn’t remember his own
name.
For now Roger was sweeping Freddie towards the door, who was blowing kisses vaguely in Jim’s
direction.
“Please come back later” croaked Jim. Oh God, what an idiot he was making of himself!
Encounters: As it Began

Chapter Summary

Jim starts to get to know our favourite boys a little better. He is astonished to discover that Freddie is very promiscuous for one so young, but also fiercely independent. It might be a little harder to get Freddie to notice him than he originally thought.....

Chapter Notes

Thank you so so much for all your support

Jim spotted Brian first making his way through the door of the Market Tavern. He really hadn’t believed him when he said the band would be returning that night.

Jim ducked behind the bar to check his reflection in the mirror. He ran his fingers quickly through his hair as a make shift comb, and splashed on some cologne.

“You going out tonight Jim? Bit late to be starting now.” Jim had hoped not to be caught staring at himself in the mirror – especially after he had thoroughly embarrassed himself when he found out that Chris knew Freddie from art school, and proceeded to bombard him with rather obvious questions.

“You went to college with Freddie? Which college? Did he study music? Was he a good student? Did he sing or play piano? Was he popular? Is he gay? Does he have anyone?” Jim could see himself turning red just thinking about it.

Jim had managed to glean that Freddie was a bit of a mystery, and was considered to be something of an oddball.

“He was dead shy at school.” Chris had said “Most people thought he was a bit of a wally to be honest. No one would have thought he would join a rock band, let alone front one. Our art lecturer asked the lad who sat next to him if he understood English because he was so quiet. He speaks better English than I ever will, the Queen’s English. Hell of a singer mind you. We had a piano in the canteen at college. One day Freddie started to play, then I heard his voice, and it pinned me to the wall.”

Feeling better prepared Jim popped back through to the bar to find Brian and Deaky had made themselves comfortable. Brian was flicking through the paper.

“Welcome back. Are you done for the night now? Can you relax a bit?” Jim shook their hands, and pulled them both a pint. He looked around, no Freddie, Jim could feel the disappointment settle in the pit of his stomach.

“Where’s Pocahontas?” he inquired casually. Deaky snorted into his pint.
“Freddie and Roger are the naughty ones” said Brian. Jim chuckled. He wouldn’t have picked that!

“They are off painting the town the colours of hell. They are a nightmare them two. It’s uncanny how well they get along. They are like the other’s equal and opposite. No doubt they are already pissed – Freddie can’t hold a drink to save his life – but Roger does a little better. They’ll be knee deep in prospects for the evening too. I’ve never understood how they manage to pull when they are out together; one women, the other men, but they never fail.”

“Oh” said Jim. A little taken back, but rather more amused.

“Pair of tarts them two” Deaky said with affection. “Roger mentioned they were off to The Catacombs at Earl’s Court, then El Sombrero later on. Freddie was hoping to pick up some talent, and Roger … well we won’t see him again tonight” he laughed.

Jim’s ears pricked up at the names of the bars. Underground, aggressive places, even he wouldn’t drink there. Not somewhere he would expect young students to frequent. “Those are not nice bars, will they be ok?” said Jim hoping they wouldn’t think it odd that he was concerned about the welfare of complete strangers.

“Oh yeah, they are together. It’s their victims I feel for, they don’t stand a chance” Brian shook his head laughing. Jim chuckled. “They do look after each other. Until Roger finds his lay for the night, then he’ll be off, and Freddie will go home. In all the time I’ve lived with Fred, he’s never slept out, not once. He’s like a cat, only sleeps where he’s safe, warm and fed” Brian chuckled and rolled his eyes. “Of course that means he’s doing his business God knows where – urgh!” both Brian and Deaky wrinkled their noses, really not wanting to think about their flatmate’s sex life at all.

Jim could not explain it, but he was very amused, and oddly turned on by the thought of Freddie out there turning that sex appeal on the unsuspecting men of London. If he affected others the way he had affected Jim, the poor souls wouldn’t stand a chance.

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Jim was pleasantly surprised how well he got on with Brian and Deaky – Brian especially – Deaky was a little quiet, but very polite.

The bar staff were cleaning down the tables, and Jim cashing up, when Roger dashed into the bar followed by a rather more subdued Freddie. Roger threw his arms around Brian and Deaky’s shoulders who looked at him like they were having a vision. Checking behind him for a woman.

“Didn’t expect to see you again today mate?” said Deaky.

Roger’s speech was slurred, and he used the boys to keep himself upright. “We’ve been looking all over London for you! Got in a fight. Freddie saved my life man!”

Freddie was quiet, standing beside the bar examining his hand. He looked a lot smaller than the flamboyant front man who had left earlier in the evening.

“S’up Fred?” asked Deaky.

“Oh yes!” shouted Roger as though suddenly remembering where he’d left his keys. “Freddie needs to go to hospital.”

Everyone looked at Freddie, who scowled at Roger, but didn’t elaborate, so Roger picked up the story. “So these guys jumped us because apparently the girl I kissed ….Sharon….no Sandra….was the girlfriend of one of their mates. I mean, how was I to know that?!” the pitch of Roger’s voice was
getting higher and higher as he became more animated. “So they all jumped on me, and started punching me. I fought them all off (he looked so proud), but as I made a run for it the boyfriend flung his pint pot at me! If Fred hadn’t deflected it as it shattered, it would have smashed on my head!”

He gave Freddie a squeeze, but Freddie was still scowling. “Show them” he grabbed Freddie’s sleeve and yanked his arm up onto the bar. Freddie kept his hand closed, for once not wanting to show off. As soon as Roger let go he yanked his hand behind his back. “So we need to go with him to the hospital, because he won’t go on his own”.

“What exactly is wrong with Freddie?” inquired Brian, the voice of reason.

“I told you! He caught a glass as it shattered” Roger rolled his eyes in exasperation. “He still has a chunk of it in his hand.” Everyone gasped, and turned to Freddie.

“Let me have a look Fred” said Brian grabbing Freddie’s arm. He opened his hand carefully to show Brian, who suddenly felt a little squeamish.

“I need something to get it out with” said Freddie quietly.

“Yes, surgical tweezers….IN A HOSPITAL” Roger yelled in Freddie’s ear. Freddie curled his shoulder up against the sound.

Jim peered over Brian’s shoulder at Freddie’s hand “Ouch! You need to go to hospital, they’ll whip that out for you quick sharp.”

Freddie shivered “No hospitals. I won’t go” he said fiercely. “Do you have a first aid kit dear?” Freddie asked sweetly, fluttering his eyelashes at Jim. He would do anything not to go to hospital.

Roger tutted and rolled his eyes “Hospital Fred! I am a biology student. I know a bit about the human body. That won’t come out with anything you will find in a first aid kit. Not to mention if it’s in a vein you will bleed to death if you take it out!”

Deaky rolled his eyes “Rog, you’re a dental student!”

“No hospitals!” shouted Freddie pouting. “I’m going home” he turned to leave.

“No!” they all shouted grabbing at Freddie and pulling him back to the bar.

Jim realising they were not going to get Freddie to the hospital willingly, summoned him behind the bar. He pulled out a stool from under the counter and indicated that Freddie should sit down.

“Is that in case he faints?” laughed Roger.

Jim held his hand up to Freddie as though telling an animal to stay. He returned minutes later with a first aid kit. He turned Freddie toward the back of the bar trying to prop his hand up to get a better look under the light. His frown deepened. “I really think you should go to the hospital. I’ve nothing to pull that out with sweetie, and I can’t numb it for you. You would feel everything.”

Freddie brushed his free hand over his cheek quickly, Jim thought he might have seen a tear. “No hospitals, just take it out.” He went to grab the kit. “If you won’t, I’ll do it myself.”

Jim looked at him, concern on his face “You’re a stubborn little thing. Ok, I’ll try, but if that thing starts gushing you’re going straight to the hospital – no arguments.” Freddie pouted, but nodded.
While laying out the sterile wipes, tweezers and bandages Jim took a moment to surreptitiously study Freddie’s face in profile. His face was so interesting. Having learnt from Chris that Freddie was not English born, it was now obvious in the curve and plumpness of his lips. His nose and cheek bones were as though chiseled from smooth marble. His eyes were indeed the windows to his heart and soul. Enormous, lash lined, the most perfect shade of glossy brown, they shone with intelligence, humour, and a certain softness. They were directed at his lap at that moment, locking Jim out from seeing what he was thinking. Jim did not really know how to proceed if he was honest. He had done some extensive first aid training, but wasn’t prepared for this.

“Hey” Jim nudged Freddie’s shoulder “Come out with me. Next weekend. I’ll take you for a meal and some nice drinks. Say yes.” Jim wasn’t really sure what he was doing – apart from thoroughly embarrassing himself - but if he could bring the smile back to Freddie’s face, it would be worth it.

Freddie seemed flustered, and uncharacteristically off balance. His blush was really quite endearing. “What do you mean? Like you want to take me on ….a date? I’ve never been on a date before” He tilted his head and looked so confused. Jim’s breath caught in his throat. He was so attractive! Feeling he had stared a little too long, Jim returned his attention to the casualty’s hand, wondering how best to use the tweezers.

“One, two, three” Jim counted much too fast for Freddie to even realise what he was doing, never mind brace himself. He yelped and tried to pull his hand loose from Jim’s grip without success. Jim wrapped an arm around Freddie’s shoulders rubbing soothing circles onto his back “That’s it. It’s out. I just need to check there’s no more glass in it, clean it, bandage it, then you’re all good. No hospital.”

Freddie was wincing, but kept his hand still as Jim cleaned the wound with antiseptic and wrapped a small bandage around it. Jim smiled to himself, and continued to wrap the full length of the bandage around Freddie’s hand to make the wound look enormous. Something impressive to show his friends.

Finally Jim kissed the back of his hand with a smile and asked again “Come out with me?”

Freddie giggled “Would that be my payment for medical services?” he joked, but kissed Jim’s cheek, and looked him in the eye with such sincerity that Jim thought his heart would stop “Thank you darling.”

He jumped down off the stool and ran back to the bar. Throwing both arms around Roger, showing off his enormous bandage. The showman was back.

He didn’t say no thought Jim……
The club lights at Copacabana seemed brighter tonight. The music throbbed, the dance floor flashed, and the disco ball reflected sparkles across bright happy faces. Jim wasn’t working tonight. He was already a few pints down, and was enjoying a night out with the lads he’d met from his early days on the club doors.

It was a while since Jim had been in here. He wasn’t much of a club man. He preferred a pint down the Irish bar, where he could sit alone and watch people having fun. He didn’t mind being alone. In fact he preferred that to the wrong sort of company. Looking around the club, he could see a lot of the wrong sort in here. With working bar security, Jim had learnt to spot the worst kind early on.

He wasn’t about to let that spoil his night though. They were out for his friend’s birthday, and although not gay, the birthday boy preferred to come to the gay clubs for the good music. His friends had already ribbed Jim about his total lack of love interest, and had vowed to find him somebody tonight. They didn’t understand how difficult it was to actually meet someone in the gay community. Someone nice, someone who Jim actually found attractive. The gay scene was so promiscuous - which could be fun - but Jim had been messed around so many times before. He wasn’t expecting to be knocked off his feet, but it would be nice to find someone to enjoy a drink with.

He was in the mood to dance too. He couldn’t remember how many drinks he’d had when Tony the birthday boy put another pint in his hand. A good song came on and Jim momentarily lost himself in the beat.

A couple of the lads tapped his shoulder and made their way towards a free table on the edge of the dance floor. Jim nodded, but intend to keep dancing for a while.

It was there he saw him.

Freddie was dancing.

Although surrounded by men, Freddie appeared to be alone, lost in the music, as though no one was watching him. He was a great dancer. It was as though the music was channeling through him, forcing him to move his body in time. He was completely uninhibited. Eyes closed, hands in his hair, shimmering satin in the lights.

Jim couldn’t take his eyes off him.
Tony noticed Jim standing stock still in the throng of moving people and followed his gaze.

“Do you know him?” Tony shouted over the music.

“He’s so fucking hot” Jim’s bluntness was not like him at all. “I met him a couple of weeks ago at The Tavern. He’s the lead singer of a student band that’s just started playing there. Just look at him” Jim said in awe as though talking to himself. “I see the make-up, and the strategically tight trousers … but I also see an angel!”

“Whoo-hooo!” Tony whistled. “Oy lads, our Jim boy is in love.” Tony pointed at Freddie who was completely oblivious. Although knowing Freddie, Jim knew he must have been totally aware of the effect he was having on every man in the club!

One of Jim’s friends tapped Freddie’s shoulder to get his attention, and pointed at Jim. Freddie looked confused as though he was trying to work out if he knew the man who had touched him.

It wasn’t uncommon for strange men to touch him. In fact men seemed to touch Freddie a lot, and he never seemed to mind. Jim, however was mildly annoyed at his friend for disturbing Freddie. He was back in the room, and suddenly a little shy and self-conscious, Freddie’s piece of musical heaven had been lost to him.

Jim scanned the group of younger men around him, probably college friends, looking for Brian, Roger or Deaky. Anyone he could get an in with Freddie, but he didn’t recognise any of the men with him tonight.

As though propelled by an invisible force Jim made his way over. Telling himself he was going to his friends, to have a chat, to have a drink.

To get to the table he had to squeeze past Freddie. As he approached, he suddenly felt alcohol fueled courage take over him. When he was just close enough to smell Freddie’s perfume, to feel wisps of his hair in his face, Jim wrapped his arms around him in a huge bear hug.

Freddie who was completely unaware of who was holding him, allowed himself to be hugged, and almost seemed to glow from the affection. He turned around, with a vague sense of recognition when he saw Jim’s face. Some weeks had past, and Freddie met a lot of people.

It wasn’t like that for Jim though. He knew exactly what he wanted. The rest of the people may as well have melted away.

“Dance with me” Jim demanded.

They fell into step, and as the music went up-tempo Jim whirled Freddie around the dance floor. Freddie laughed from the pure joy of being thrown around. His joy was infectious, and soon other men broke into the circle and started to whirl him around too.

Jim was annoyed, but he couldn’t be annoyed at Freddie. He was laughing opening like a child, lapping up the attention and exuding sparkle like a fire work. Jim noticed Freddie was a very physical being, who didn’t seem to mind being touched, squeezed and tickled by strangers, all vying for his attention. He was tantalising. He was magnetic.

Jim pulled Freddie in towards him and held him there. Time seemed to stand still for a second or two, as the movement continued around them. Looking deeply into those molten brown eyes, how he wanted to kiss those lips. He could feel himself becoming aroused, just from the feel of Freddie’s body pressed tightly against his own, and the scent of his light perfume. He had never wanted anyone more than this. It was making him bold, and brave, and possessive. All the things he was not.
Jim worked an inquisitive hand around the back of Freddie’s neck weaving it into his hair, and just as he was about to kiss him, Freddie was pulled roughly from his arms.

Jim felt fury well up inside him, and he grabbed at Freddie’s wrist. Freddie looked momentarily startled, but the look was soon replaced with a cheeky grin.

A much larger man draped himself over Freddie’s shoulders nearly knocking him over with his weight. He whispered something into Freddie’s ear, and a look of pure lust swept across his face. Whatever he had said, he had Freddie’s attention, and knew how to bring him to his knees.

Jim recognised the man immediately. He would know that face anywhere. Jim Connors. Small time criminal, gay menace. Jim couldn’t be sure it was true, but he had heard on the grapevine that Connors had been locked up for assault. He hadn’t been seen around London for a while.

He was always picking on the little ones. The young men, the students, the ones who weren’t entirely sure it was men they wanted. He must have been in his 30’s easily. Surely too old to need to be picking up students.

Jim couldn’t be sure of Freddie’s age, but he was just Connors’ type. Small enough to manhandle, willing enough to enjoy it. Of all the people to have moved from the same small Irish town as Jim, it had to be Connors.

Connors was pushing Freddie across the dance floor towards the bathroom, and Freddie was delighted. Matching Connors’ rough technique with giggles and flirty touches.

Jim felt an overwhelming plethora of unpleasant emotions take hold in the pit of his stomach. He barely knew Freddie, Connors might be just his type, and he had no right to tell him what to do, but before he had formulated a plan Jim was storming after them. He grabbed Connors’ shoulder and spun him round. Connors recognised Jim, knew his type, knew he was no threat to him. Connors grinned slowly.

“What’s up man – you want a threesome?” Freddie giggled.

Jim knew it was pointless negotiating with a man like Connors, so he appealed to Freddie. “Come on darling, this guy is bad news.”

Freddie looked dumbstruck. It was then that Jim realised how drunk Freddie was. Jim gently wrapped his hand around Freddie’s wrist and tried to lead him away from Connors. Connors gripped tighter.

“Piss off prick. Our songbird here can screw whoever he likes…and so can I!” His cocky face was up close to Jim’s.

So, he knew Freddie was a singer. Jim wondered if they had history.

With a move that Jim had been taught on his security training, he twisted Connors’ arm up his back until he released Freddie.

Recognising that their friend was in the thick of trouble, Freddie’s friends surrounded him trying to shepherd him away.

Freddie however seemed excited and maybe a little aroused by the drama and the attention.

“So?” he said, beautiful eyes dark and hungry.
He moved slowly towards Jim, biting softly at his bottom lip. “What’s a boy to do, two gorgeous men fighting over me.” He pushed his taut body against Jim’s, eyes wide, chin raised, Jim felt a gentle hand brush over his crotch.

“Hmmmm you do want me” Freddie smiled and raised one eyebrow. “Well if you want me that badly you won’t mind waiting your turn will you,” and with a wink Freddie grabbed Connors by the shirt.

“Come on, you’re up gorgeous.”

Jim held onto Connors’ arm, pushing it up his back a little tighter. He knew he had no right, but the need to protect Freddie was stronger. He had no idea what had come over him. It was not a pleasant feeling.

Connors grimaced as the pain in his shoulder became almost unbearable. He didn’t want to fuck Freddie that badly. He wasn’t worth this much hassle.

“Alright, alright, get off you prick!” he tried to shrug off Jim. Jim loosened his grip, but didn’t let him go completely. “You win, you can have him.” Connors grinned at Jim once more, and walked away.

Jim was suddenly mortified. He held his hands out towards Freddie in apology.

“I’m so sorry. I don’t normally behave like that. I’ve known that man most of my life, and believe me when I say he’s not a nice man. You don’t want to tangle with him.”

Freddie looked Jim up and down “Alright Dad!” he snapped.

Freddie started to sway as the alcohol really took hold. Jim reached out to steady him, but Freddie’s friends were faster, moving him away from what they thought was a threat.

Freddie turned back “I guess I’ll never know if he could make me scream.” He winked “… and neither will you.” He turned back to his friends and disappeared into the crowd.

Jim felt defeated. He felt dirty. Who the fuck did he think he was anyway? He didn’t know Freddie….not a jot. He’d helped him down from a predicament once, as was his job at the bar. Yes, Freddie was a little flirty, but he was young, and a rock and roll star. Who was Jim? A small town bar manager from Ireland. Who was he kidding? Freddie wouldn’t look at him twice. Just because he was young, and gorgeous didn’t mean he needed Jim’s help. He might eat men like Connors for breakfast and come back for lunch. Jim simply did not know Freddie well enough to make that decision for him. Brian had said him and Roger were promiscuous, why did Jim think he wanted or needed his protection?!

Jim wished the ground would swallow him up. He had never wanted to apparate more than he did at that moment, to his flat, into his bed where he could forget about Freddie and the whole sorry night.

He couldn’t leave right now, he wouldn’t let Tony down.

He also didn’t know what to do about his ever present hard on.
Encounters: The Game

Chapter Summary

Jim realises he wants Freddie, he doesn't care how...and he'll wait...

Chapter Notes

Hold on tight.....

Another week passed before Jim ventured into the clubs again. This time it was St Patrick’s Day, a date the Irish in the community celebrate loudly and with pride. Jim had never missed a single Paddy’s Day, whether in London, or back in Ireland at the local with his family, and friends he’d known since nursery.

He had caught up with Brian once or twice during the week. Sometimes he popped into the Tavern after college to have a pint, and catch up on the day’s events with Jim. They were getting along very well, and Jim assumed that Brian must live nearby to put the Tavern on his route.

Jim couldn’t bring himself to ask about Freddie. He was still too embarrassed after making an absolute fool of himself at Copacabana. It hadn’t stopped Brian picking up little vibes though. It seemed as though Brian was dropping in little hints about where Freddie hung out in the day time, who he knew, where his favourite bars were.

If Jim was honest, that’s why he had been relieved when his friends suggested this club tonight – it wasn’t on Freddie’s list of haunts, and heaven knew that Jim was drunk enough to behave twice as irrationally as last time should he see him!

Conversely Jim was looking for Freddie around every turn – every time he heard raucous laughter, saw dark hair, or heard a rock song.

It was for this reason that Jim thought he was having a vision when he passed Freddie coming out of the bathroom with two friends. Freddie spotted Jim immediately. Dark eyes fixed upon him, chin raised in challenge, a flash of daring. Jim was close enough to look into those eyes. At first glance they were black, but very much like a night sky Jim began to see the light dancing in them. The promise of a billion galaxies, the energy, the magnetism, and the fire within.

The effect was immediate. Jim wanted to own.

He pressed his hips against Freddie’s body, easily trapping him between his own body and the wall. Freddie was aroused. Jim could feel it through those achingly tight jeans. His lips fell open and his eyes glazed.

Jim finally had his attention.

Jim brought his hand up to cup Freddie’s cheek. His skin was remarkably soft, and Jim fleetingly
wondered about his age. He took advantage of his slightly parted lips, smearing the cherry red lip gloss with the pad of his thumb, so soft.

The bathroom filled with music as someone opened the door temporarily distracting Jim from the delicious task at hand, and a sharp pain brought him upright. The cheeky brat had bitten his thumb. Haughty eyes were gloating. So dark with arousal that the pupil nearly blended with the iris, but Freddie was laughing, and back in control.

“What makes you think I’ll just roll over for you?” the voice is sharp, gauntlet set down.

Freddie used Jim’s surprise at being interrupted to escape his clutches, and headed for the way out. Before he could censor himself Jim grabbed Freddie’s wrist, and dragged him towards him, slamming him hard against his chest. Jim wrapped a strong arm over Freddie’s shoulder looping it around his waist, pinning him against his body. Freddie gasped at the shock of the sudden movement, and finding himself immobile and totally powerless against Jim’s strength. Jim swept Freddie’s hair over his shoulder, taking advantage of the exposed peach skin of his neck, pressing teasing kisses along the skin, nibbling softly. Fleetingly, and to Jim’s pleasure, Freddie relaxed into his hold, seeming to surrender to the warm sensations radiating down his body.

All too soon the spell was broken as Freddie’s friends crashed back through the door, grabbing the singer’s hand and pulling him free of Jim’s hold. One of them wolf whistled, another glared at Jim.

“Come on Freddie, it’s your round.” Freddie had the audacity to smirk, giving Jim a cheeky wave as he headed out and back into the bar.

The bathroom was quiet again as the door closed slowly behind him. Jim dropped his head into his hands. Beads of sweat on his forehead. What the hell was he doing?! Weren’t there laws against grabbing people and forcing them to submit to being touched against their will?!

Jim chuckled to himself, there was no submission on Freddie’s part. He was fearless. Meeting Jim’s boldness head on with sass – but what did that make Jim? An aggressor? A threat? A dominant? Jim had never felt more uncomfortable in his own skin.

He decided it was time to go home, and maybe he should avoid the club scene for the rest of his life! Just as he had made that decision the bathroom door crashed back into the wall as Freddie was pushed through it. A firm arm around his waist as he was practically lifted off his feet. He squealed with laughter as he was pushed towards the cubicle, the owner of the strong arm nibbling at his neck.

Freddie’s conquest was a very large man, wrapped in leather and denim, with a chain hanging from one back pocket, and a handkerchief the other. His beard was tinged with grey. A sharp contrast to the obviously younger, smaller Freddie shimmering and slippery in satin.

A vision of youth, and a lover of life.

Freddie winked at Jim before disappearing into the cubicle.

The rustle of clothing, and the bumping of limbs made it impossible for Jim to retain any restraint. He headed into the nearest cubicle and quietly shut the door. He could hear Freddie whispering and giggling, then the change in tone when the fucking began. The sounds coming from the cubicle were obscene; soft grunts, whimpers, gasps, groans, and high pitched moans. The creaking of the sink
sounded as though it was about to come clean off the wall.

Jim’s hand was down his own boxers, stroking faster, rougher.

When his own release was imminent he heard a grunt next door. “Come on baby” followed by the sound of hands connecting with flesh, and Freddie’s answering cries as it seemed his orgasm was being slapped out of him. Despite never having been a violent or dominant lover, Jim had never been more aroused, and he came in his own hand silently but with power.

Jim remained in the cubicle long after he had heard the lock being drawn back, and the man leaving the bathroom. He had waited for silence for fear of being accused of stalking Freddie – which in fairness he was. He had cleaned himself up the best he could, but he did wonder what appeal Freddie found in fucking in public places. It was messy and sticky.

His mind turned to the subject of how promiscuous Freddie was. So many men, so many partners, but none of them ever seen with him twice. How did he get to be one of those lucky men?

Jim was being blatantly resisted, that much was clear. Where was the latch? The little key that unlocked the honey pot?

Jim wanted in.

The chasm between the self that Jim knew, and the one he became around Freddie was uncomfortably widening with each encounter.

He couldn’t understand why he wanted any part of such a promiscuous man for anything other than a casual encounter. Even that situation usually only arose in Jim’s life because he had other intentions. The intention to form a relationship with someone who turned out to be not the person he expected.

Yet here he was – another day – masturbating in a filthy club toilet.

Freddie was so blatant, so conspicuous as to fuck somewhere where he could be seen entering and leaving, and heard during. There was something at odds with his character. Freddie was gorgeous that was for sure, he could have had anyone he wanted, but there was something else. He had class, he had style…. he was quick sand.

Cautiously Jim drew back the lock and made his way out of the cubicle.

He was surprised to see Freddie still in the bathroom. Seemingly in his own little world. Fastidiously straightening his clothes, and attending to his screwed hair and make-up. Jim felt like he was intruding on a private moment, so he hung back a little. A moment at juxtaposition to the spectacle he had just been subjected to in a public bathroom.

Jim was hit with an uncomfortable wave of how far the situation was from where he would like it to be. Freddie shouldn’t be sorting his post orgasm appearance in a club bathroom mirror. He should be lounging naked in Jim’s bed. Stretching languidly then curling up tightly in Jim’s arms. Warm, flushed, and basking in his afterglow. Even now Jim wanted to wrap his arms around him and scatter kisses to his face and head as he came down. Inexplicably wanting to cherish a man who had just been royally fucked by someone else.

Freddie caught Jim’s reflection in the mirror. He fluffed up his hair, wiping his thumb across his kiss reddened lips before applying a slick layer of fresh gloss. Jim could feel his cock waking up again.
Freddie turned to Jim, his beautiful eyes half lidded and sleepy revealing an essence of vulnerability.

In a flash the game was on, it was almost tangible, dispelling fragility as an illusion.

Sassy Freddie was back.

“Did you enjoy that?” he winked at Jim, transferring his weight onto his back foot, arms folded across his chest “I did”.

Jim wanted the floor to open up and swallow him whole. How could he deny having heard? Freddie had been fucked by that man and Jim had heard every movement, every moan, every gasp. But to hear it spoken about so openly, as though he was a part of what had just taken place, perhaps even the reason for the show. Jim was being taunted, and Freddie was in no doubt he wanted to take him over the sink.

Freddie smiled openly - game, set, and match.

He practically skipped past Jim as he headed for the door. Before Jim could stop himself he caught Freddie around his waist and firmly pulled him back, holding him tightly against his chest.

“Game on little one” he growled into Freddie’s ear. “One thing you should know about me Mr Mercury, I play the long game. One day your guard will drop and I will be there. I want you just for me.”

Freddie didn’t fight, he allowed himself to be held. Jim took advantage of his lack of struggle to press his lips to Freddie’s temple before releasing him.

Freddie looked back at Jim over his shoulder, his expression unreadable. With a wink he was gone.
Encounters: Fair Play

Chapter Summary

Freddie discovers that not everyone plays by the rules...

Chapter Notes

Lovies! This chapter gets a little rough in places. If you are sensitive to sexual aggression and/or non consensual drug use please read with care.

Thank you for all your support!

It was typical that after his decision to actively pursue Freddie, Jim couldn’t get time off work.

That didn’t stop Freddie drinking at the Market Tavern though, somewhere he had never visited before appearing with Queen. It was as though he was trying to taunt Jim. Keeping himself within Jim’s vision; too far away to satisfy, but not far enough away to be out of mind.

Freddie was always on a different man’s lap, fluttering from man to man, twinkling and flirty, but never quite occupied enough to not catch Jim’s eyes when they met his.

It wasn’t that Jim didn’t want to see Freddie, it was just more awkward when he was working, as he didn’t want to just see Freddie. He wanted to kiss him, to hold him, to take him home, and he couldn’t seem to control those urges whenever he was around him.

He was also pretty sure the drink wasn’t helping.

Last night against his better judgement Jim had agreed to cover his friend’s bar shift tonight at Heaven. A gay club under Charing Cross. It was a cavernous place. Impersonal. Full of side rooms and dark corners. The regular barman’s pregnant girlfriend was ill, so he couldn’t really say no, but the club’s reputation put Jim’s back up before he even arrived.

Jim didn’t especially enjoy this scene anyway, but when a friend called, he answered. It was four hours, he would live, and he always needed the money.

It didn’t take long after his eyes adjusted to the dark to see Freddie – or rather to hear him. Loud laughter came from the corner where a number of sofa’s had been pulled together to accommodate far fewer people than were crammed onto them. Jim recognised Roger too. They looked to be playing some kind of noisy board game.

Roger was wearing women well tonight – literally – he had one with her arms around his neck, another snuggled into his side, and one sitting on his lap. Despite his blonde angelic good looks, there was no way he was going to be mistaken as gay.

Roger won an arm wrestle, leapt up onto the table impersonating the Hulk, and jumped down with just enough time before the table crashed to the floor with a loud chink of smashing glass.
Jim looked up from the pint he was serving. Freddie caught his eye and raised one perfectly sculptured eyebrow. He lay across the laps of three men. There were hands all over him, and Jim felt hot.

One of the men had his arm possessively around Freddie’s waist tucking him up close, another was absentmindedly massaging his scalp, while the third was dipping his fingers in what appeared to be neat liquor and pushing them into Freddie’s mouth for him to lick it off.

If not for the throbbing disco music, Jim could have heard him purr.

“Jim….Jim….where are you man?” Suddenly Jim realised the bar manager was at his side snapping his fingers to get his attention. “Go and clean that lot up would you please mate? I’ve a large order to serve next door.” Jim sighed heavily, and turned to look at the portly bar manager “Must I?!?” He knew what would happen the minute he got within Freddie’s arena.

“Please mate. I know you’re doing us a massive favour tonight just by being here, but if someone gets cut it’s my ass in the sling.”

Resigned to his task Jim made his way over to the table, bucket and brush in hand. With not a word to any of the occupants he began cleaning up.

A tiny pair of platform shoes appeared. Jim brushed over the toes, and Freddie giggled.

“Thank you Mr Shoe Shine. They needed a clean.”

Resist Jim…resist….don’t bite!

Like a man magnetised Jim slowly, slowly ran his hands over Freddie’s ankles, calves, thighs, moving up and up, and up. By the time he was standing he was tracing the curve of Freddie’s buttocks and hips before settling his hands on his waist. The table erupted into wolf whistles as Jim tangled a hand into Freddie’s hair, and pulled his head upwards lips poised to kiss him. Freddie was mesmerised, and powerless to stop him.

Just as quickly Jim broke the spell, kissing Freddie carefully on the forehead and swinging him out of the area of broken glass.

“You should be careful of the broken glass you know, it might nip,” Freddie yelped as Jim gave him a teasing tickle.

Feeling more than a little proud of his self-control, Jim headed back to the bar swinging his bucket.

“Hey, it’s your round” yelled Roger breaking Freddie’s concentration. A pout still on lips as he watched Jim walk away. That wasn’t nearly as satisfying.

Freddie made his way towards the bar when he felt firm hands grip him from behind.

“Hey songbird, where’s your guard dog?” Freddie fixed a bright smile onto his face, he felt like being evil tonight. He turned to look up into the broad face of the man that Jim had pulled him from the clutches of the other night. Jim Connors.

Take two, bring it on.

A delicious shiver ran through him. He took in the set of Connors’ frame – solid muscle, broad shoulders. Freddie could feel enormous powerful hands on his buttocks. Without warning he jumped
into Connors’ arms wrapping his legs tightly around his hips. Freddie knew without a doubt that the man could support his weight easily.

“I’m unescorted darling” Freddie bit his lip and smiled, flirtatiously flicking his hair over one shoulder. Firm lips pressed into his, a bruising kiss. Connors made a great show of brushing Freddie’s hair back to exam his neck.

“I’m just checking songbird. You seemed pretty owned the other night. Shocked to fuck he hasn’t marked you up. I know I would. I saw your man about five minutes ago. Out back having a smoke. Told him exactly what I had planned for his princess next time I saw you.”

“Mmmmmmm” Freddie was in heaven. His heart beat quickening in anticipation of how this man could make him feel. He laid his hot cheek against Connors’ shoulder, and widening his beautiful eyes said sweetly “Can I have my present now?”

“I dunno, I think your guard dog should watch.” Freddie giggled, enjoying the prospect of winding Jim a little tighter.

Connors carried Freddie, legs still wrapped around his waist over to the corner beside the bar, disappointed not to be able to see Jim.

“Looks like we’ll have to start without him” he growled in Freddie’s ear.

He set Freddie down on his feet, but as Freddie reached up to pull him in for a kiss, Connors whipped him around quickly to face the wall, pressing him bodily into it, raising both of Freddie’s arms above his head. Roughly he grabbed Freddie’s hair and pulled his head back onto his shoulder exposing his neck. He sucked and nipped into the delicate skin as Freddie gasped at the quickening pain in the pleasure.

“I’ll show him who owns you songbird.”

Freddie felt like a bird of paradise right now. Cornered and trapped and unable to flap his wings, he loved the feeling. Being powerless in the arms of a much stronger man, he felt he could show all his colours. He didn’t mind them being a little rough. He liked it. It proved that he was desirable. That men wanted him, and couldn’t control themselves when they got their hands on him.

“Hmmm, so, what shall I do with you? Can’t very well fuck you right here in the club” he left bruising kisses along Freddie’s collarbone. “Wonder what’s taking your man so long.”

“Forget about him” whispered Freddie breathless trying to pull his arms free. “I want you now!”

Freddie gasped when his head was pulled towards Connors for a punishing kiss.

“Want to try a little breath play while we wait songbird?” Connors grabbed Freddie’s wrists and squeezed at the pulse points.

The sharpness and the shock of the pain made Freddie yelp, “Fuck that hurt!” he squealed. Eyes rolling back with laughter, as he shook one hand free, but Connors held onto the other one tightly.

Freddie felt Connors’ hand brush over his erection, and up his torso, squeezing him tightly to his own body. Freddie gasped at the pleasure, and allowed his head to roll back onto the Connors’ shoulder.

Suddenly a hand gripped his throat hard and painfully. He couldn’t breathe, he couldn’t swallow, he couldn’t cry out. Fear gripped him rising from his stomach as he started to panic.
Somewhere a line had been crossed between dominated and helpless.

He struggled, but was held fast, as though in a web of long limbs, large hands and a solid wall of muscle.

“You won’t feel that in a moment songbird” Connors spoke slowly, drawing out every word into Freddie’s ear.

“All you will feel as the air flows back into your lungs is the blood rushing to your cock, and you will want that over and over again.”

Between the wall, and Connors’ body Freddie could only feel pain and fear.

“You’re hurting me, I don’t want to” he gasped. Not sure if the sound was in his head, or he could actually be heard.

The hand clenched tighter around his throat. Freddie kicked back wildly trying desperately to make contact with his knees, or any weak spot so he could regain some control. His struggle was ineffectual against the stronger man.

“You’re a fighter songbird. I like that” he growled.

Freddie’s hand was suddenly released, but too late he felt the hand that had been gripping him clamped around his mouth. Desperately Freddie bit at the fingers, but something slipped into his mouth.

Connors smoothly dragged Freddie’s head back certain he would swallow.

Hopelessly Freddie cried out for Roger.

“My name is not Roger songbird. My name is Jim, and you’ll remember it.”

Freddie felt pain as his arm was squeezed up his back in a bone splintering grip. He thought he saw someone looking, someone who could help him, but his vision faded to spots as the haze crept in.

His last thought before fading from consciousness was not again, please God not again…..
Encounters: Who's that boy?

Chapter Summary

Jim finally gets Freddie into bed…but not in the way he had hoped. In fact, he barely recognises him.

Chapter Notes

You can come down off the cliff now lovises.

As always, your thoughts are greatly appreciated.

Jim smiled softly as Freddie stirred, and settled back down against the soft woolen blanket that was wrapped tightly around him. He didn’t make the most polite of bed fellows, but Jim would have moved the earth to have Freddie snuggled up against him every night.

Freddie had not woken up all night, but he had been restless, crying out sometimes as if in the grip of a nightmare, kicking, wriggling and stealing all of the blankets. The only time he had really settled was when Jim had wrapped his arms tightly around him and pulled him close to his body. They had stayed that way until the early hours when Jim had crept out of bed to brush his teeth, and put a glass of water and some paracetamol on the cabinet next to Freddie.

Freddie had been very out of it last night, unusually drunk to the point of helplessness when Jim had half carried, half dragged him into his car. He had found him all crumpled in a heap, already sleeping snuggling up to the arm of the sofa in the club.

Unusually Freddie was alone.

Jim had attempted to wake him, asking him where Roger was, and did he need a lift home. Jim couldn’t get anything coherent out of him, and had only caught glimpses of his beautiful brown eyes as he had struggled with heavy lids.

Not knowing what to do, and more than a little pleased that he had finally got Freddie to himself, Jim had brought him home.

Things hadn’t improved much when they got home. Jim couldn’t get any water into Freddie, and when he had left him to his privacy to get changed into one of Jim’s shirts ready for sleep, Jim had returned to find Freddie still fully dressed fast asleep on top of his bed.

All thoughts of having any fun gone from Jim’s mind. He wanted Freddie to remember their first night together.

For all his hot blood, Jim wasn’t one to take advantage.

Not knowing quite what to do for the best, Jim had carefully removed Freddie’s top and jeans – thankful that it wasn’t one of those clinging catsuits he sometimes wore - and that he was at least
wearing – if ineffectual – underwear.

Jim felt slightly perverted admiring his body, but my God Freddie was a beautiful man.

Perversely he also smiled at some old faded bite marks along his collar bone and rib cage. There was one deep purple bite under his chin that was fresh and weeping. He also had a number of small bruises around his throat that looked painful, and Jim was a little concerned.

Freddie blatantly had so many men, and Jim couldn’t understand why seeing the marks left by some other man in the throes of passion didn’t turn him off completely.

Even now in repose, much softened, Freddie had stunning features. Plump dusky rose lips half open in very quiet contented snores. He had an overbite that was cute. His body was masculine with downy black hair covering his chest and stomach, but his proportions slight, so slim, with delicate hands and feet.

Enough now, Jim thought to himself, pulling back the covers. It wasn’t right that Freddie wasn’t conscious to consent to his body being admired. He was missing an opportunity to show off, Jim thought and smiled to himself.

He covered Freddie gently with the quilt, then took his thick woolen blanket down from the top of the wardrobe, and laid it over the top of him in case he woke up confused and disorientated. At least he would be warm.

As Jim waited for Freddie to wake, he thought a little about the day ahead.

Maybe Freddie would like to go out for some breakfast. They could take in some sights around London. Besides the band, Jim didn’t know if Freddie had a job he needed to go to, or perhaps he was at college or university.

If he didn’t have to be anywhere, Jim would take him out later, there was a band on the Market Tavern, or perhaps one of the clubs he liked, they could go dancing.

Soft brown eyes were slowly opening, then closing again, as if the battle to come to consciousness was being lost.

Jim tenderly brushed a few strands of dark hair from his temple.

“Morning Sleeping Beauty, it’s me Jim.”

Freddie’s eyes snapped open and looked frantically around the room.

“Jim?” he asked tentatively.

Not a second later he leapt up to sitting, pulling the blanket tightly around his body protectively.

“Where am I?” his eyes were wild with panic.

Jim chuckled, “Wow, you really were out of it! Don’t you remember anything from last night?”

Jim reached over to grab the water for Freddie. Instinctively Freddie’s hands flew up to protect himself, and push Jim away, he screamed in pain when his injured hand caught Jim’s.

Jim didn’t know what to do.
He looked on in horror as it dawned on him that Freddie was actually paralysed with fear… and looking directly at him!

Freddie’s face screwed up in pain, and he clasped his injured hand with the other.

“Hey, hey,” soothed Jim, hands raised in surrender.

“I have no idea what’s happening right now but you are perfectly safe here Freddie. You were very drunk last night, and you were alone, so I brought you home with me. Can you remember?” Jim asked.

Not taking his eyes from Freddie’s face in concern, Jim was shocked to see tears forming.

Freddie looked very young this morning. Most of last night’s makeup had rubbed off his face.

Who was this young boy in his bed, and where was his sexy, sassy Freddie? The Freddie that had driven a man mad in a public toilet, and challenged Jim to round two?

Freddie looked frantically from side to side like a cornered animal looking for a way to flee. He raised his hands to dab at the tears that were rolling freely down his face now, and for the first time Jim noticed the dark bruising on his wrists.

Unsure what to do with his hands, Jim plumped up the pillows behind Freddie and said “Lie back for me sweetheart while you get your bearings. You really are safe here. Can you tell me what happened to your wrists?”

Choosing his battles Freddie reluctantly settled back down under the blanket. “They hurt” he whispered wiping away fresh tears.

Jim held out his hand to encourage Freddie to show him, but he quickly snapped his hands under the blanket.

Jim looked at Freddie in concern looking for signs of any other injury.

“Listen sweetheart, Brian told me you like a cup of tea first thing, so I’ll go get some, and I’ve probably got some frozen vegetables for those bruises. Then we can have a little talk OK? When you are feeling better I will take you anywhere you want to go.”

*********************************

Downstairs waiting for the kettle to boil, Jim felt like a monster. In the cold light of day his actions looked very different.

He had taken a young - possibly teenage - boy out of the club when he was too intoxicated to consent. He had taken him home and undressed him without being told that he could. He was hurt, disorientated, and very frightened. He didn’t know where he was, or how to get home.

Jim’s plans for the day ahead suddenly came crashing down around him. Somehow he had managed to do wrong by Freddie yet again. He needed to take him home as a matter of urgency - where he was warm, safe and fed - as Brian had put it. He needed to get Brian’s address and phone number for Freddie related emergencies such as these, but for now he needed to get a cup of tea into him, and try to find out what the hell had happened.
Jim carefully balanced the tea tray on one hand as he knocked softly on his bedroom door. He pushed on the door and called Freddie. The bed was empty, his clothes and shoes were gone.

Jim dropped the tray on the chest of drawers and ran quickly to the window to see if he could see him. Nothing. No sign. He was fast if nothing else.

Jim dropped his head into his hands. Freddie had no idea where he was, or how to get home, and it was all Jim’s doing.
Encounters: Interrogation

Chapter Summary

Jim finds an unlikely ally in Brian, but if he’s going to get to Freddie, he needs to bare his soul….

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for your support!

“Did you, or did you not tell him you are waiting for him to drop his guard so you can own him?” Brian was furious, and more than a little stunned.

He’d had a difficult time coaxing the story out of a very unnerved Freddie when he had finally arrived home that morning. Brian had grown to like Jim in the short time he had known him, and considered himself to be a good judge of character - usually.

“I didn’t say that!” Jim yelled back, pushing his knuckles into his eyes, as the evening in question returned to him in flashes, “…or perhaps I did, I don’t know!” Realisation dawned on him, “Oh God, I didn’t mean it like that!”

Jim was exhausted from his disturbed night, and having spent the day worrying about Freddie. He had gone over and over the course of the evening in his mind, and he didn’t understand any more than he had earlier.

He was relieved when Brian had arrived, but didn’t expect to be interrogated.

He didn’t know what to tell him that would cast anymore light on the events of this morning.

“It was a game! Freddie’s always playing these games, and not just with me. He’s flirty and playful one minute, challenging me the next, it’s just all a game.” Jim flung his hands up in frustration.

“Yes, but Freddie’s not really like that underneath” Brian said softly, dropping his head unsure if to carry on.

“And another thing. He didn’t fight me …” Jim continued, trying to defend his actions. “…in the club….I may have manhandled him, but he didn’t push me away. He didn’t give me any indication that he was genuinely upset.”

“He shouldn’t have to! Why does he need to escape from you Jim?” Brian’s voice was rising again.

“He’s covered in bruises– what am I missing here?” Brian was genuinely asking the question. He didn’t want to think badly of Jim, but the evidence was all there.

“Not from me!” Jim shouted back. “I swear, I did nothing to hurt him Brian.”
“He can’t remember a thing from last night after he saw you in the club. Did you slip him something?” asked Brian.

“What sort of a man do you think I am?!” Jim bellowed. He took a deep settling breath and stared at his hands trying to order his thoughts. He needed to put the record straight.

“Freddie was in the club, off his head on something… more than usual I mean. He was unable to stand without my help. I’ve never seen him like that before. He was alone on the sofa by the bar fast asleep. His friends had left him. We were closing. I couldn’t get any sense out of him. I don’t have your number. I don’t know where you guys live. I took him home with me, wrapped him up warm in my bed where he stayed the night. I didn’t touch him Brian, I’m not a forceful man.” Jim said quickly looking up at Brian, but there were tears in his eyes.

Brian shook his head sadly, putting his hand out towards Jim. “Freddie is not saying you did Jim. He did say you undressed him?” he said carefully, not wanting Jim to think he was being accused of inflicting anything more than a few bruises.

“What should I have done? His clothes were so tight I didn’t want him getting a hernia while he slept! I stripped him down to his pointless underwear and put him in bed. He slept the night through.”

Brian allowed himself a small smile. Under any other circumstances Freddie would have loved that, and would have told the tale for weeks – if Jim had have been one of his conquests.

Jim was horribly confused by the turn of events, and didn’t understand how he had got to where he was now. His mind flashed over his behaviour in recent weeks, he could see how it might have been misconstrued - an older man, chasing, bullying even.

It wasn’t like that though, Jim had been sure. There was attraction there on both sides. It had been a game – cat and mouse – who would surrender first. He had enjoyed every second of it, he thought Freddie had too. No, he damn well knew Freddie had enjoyed it, he had initiated it, and had played a blinding hand.

Jim took a deep breath, and sighed heavily. Sitting down at the kitchen table with his head in his hands.

“Is Freddie alright?” he asked much calmer now.

Brian nodded “Yeah. He’s fine. He’s having a piano delivered this afternoon so he’s squeakier than normal.” Brian felt the tension starting to leave him with the change in Jim’s demeanour.

He didn’t enjoy confrontation.

“Look, I admit I can see how it might have looked now, but I couldn’t just leave him there.” Jim started, but quietly this time. “You should see the type of men he drags into dark corners. He needs our help Brian, he’s a threat to himself. I took him home to keep him safe.”

“That’s really none of our business Jim,” whispered Brian, a little embarrassed.

Jim signed again. He knew he would want to crawl under a rock once he started talking, but he realised that if he was to hold on to any sort of friendship with Brian - or contact with Freddie for that matter - he had to be completely honest with him.

“I’m not myself around Freddie. Ever since I clapped eyes on him I’ve acted like an idiot. It’s like I’m watching myself doing these stupid things.”
Brian cleared his throat, a blush was making its way up his neck, and rapidly covering his face. “Are you saying you like Freddie? As in - you fancy him?”

“It’s just…I don’t just fancy him… I want all of him” Jim said quietly, exhausted. “I want a relationship with him.”

Brian whistled from the enormity of Jim’s statement. He might as well have said he was going to Mars on the next mission.

Jim indicated that Brian should sit down, as he got up to put the kettle on.

The wheels were turning in Brian’s mind, considering how much he should confide in Jim about his friend’s personal business. The small part that even he knew about that is! He knew if Freddie ever found out that Brian had spoken about him behind his back, he would be plying his friend with champagne for weeks while he got over the betrayal. Freddie valued loyalty above all else, but there was something wholesome, something grounded about Jim, and despite giving Freddie a nasty shock, Brian believed Jim when he said that had not been his intention.

He measured his words carefully.

“Listen Jim. I know this is hard for you to understand, I don’t fully understand it myself, but you may need to accept that Freddie may never be receptive to you in the way you want. What you’re suggesting….what you are offering, well, I don’t think Freddie could ever understand it. He’s never had a meaningful relationship – with anyone. Roger is probably the closest person to him on earth. I don’t think he’s ever known love - not like we do. I mean, I’ve had a girlfriend for a while, I’m sure you’ve had relationships too. He has a lot of sex…he has a lot, a lot of sex! He never brings a boyfriend home, he never stays with them, we never see the same man twice. He can’t stand to rely on someone, for someone to potentially have something over him. It’s how he keeps the people he wants in his life just close enough. He’s our mate and we love him, but even we can’t tell Freddie what to do. He has lived with strangers since he was 7 years old. Can you even imagine that?! ”

That was the most that Jim had ever heard Brian say, and it floored him.

Nobody spoke for the longest time, and Jim felt very uncomfortable. He thought that at any moment Brian would leave, and Jim would lose his new friends, Freddie too. It wasn’t just his attraction to Freddie, or the fact that they were a band destined for world domination, he genuinely liked them as people, and had hoped they would see a lot more of each other.

Finally Brian sighed deeply and ran his hands through his curls, as though a decision had been made.

“Listen, I want to help you” Brian looked at Jim with such sincerity “… somehow. In a twisted way I think you could be good for Freddie, but at the moment he thinks you’re an obsessed fan…” Brian chuckled “…yes, he’s that hung up on himself. I want to trust you’re a good guy. Don’t prove me wrong. Come round tonight, as my guest. I’ll give you the address. You mentioned before that you played a bit. We’ll have a casual jam session.”

Jim whistled “I’ve not played for years, I’m not that good mate!” Jim was terrified of making an idiot of himself in front of his very talented friends – especially Freddie.

“All songs start with an idea mate, you don’t have to be Mozart. It just seems to me that there are too many variables out in the clubs. We’ll have a few beers. Freddie will be relaxing at home, a chilled environment. Let him see you as one of the lads.”

“I don’t want to be one of the lads” cried Jim. “I want to be his boyfriend, his partner, his significant
other! I’m always that guy, the terrific friend, that’s not how I want Freddie to see me” he said bitterly.

Brian sighed “It’s the only way you’re going to get close mate. You’re either a friend, or a shag, and he’s suspicious of you now, he’s not going to open up if he thinks you want to shag him.”

“But I do want to!” cried Jim blushing a furious crimson. “Oh God, that’s not entirely what I meant, it’s coming out all wrong again, I’m a mess around Freddie, this is a nightmare!”

“Look, don’t make me regret inviting you” Brian said sternly.

“If Freddie doesn’t see you as someone other than his kidnapper by the time you leave tonight, then I don’t want to see you around him again. Got it?”

His voice softened “I do believe you are a nice guy Jim – I do – but Queen is a business, we need Freddie functioning, and on a personal note, I don’t ever want to see my friend like he was this morning again.”
Encounters: Integration

Chapter Summary

Jim is invited to Freddie’s home for a boys night in, and an impromptu game of Truth or Dare!

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for your support. You have been more helpful than you know :)

Jim perched uncomfortably on the edge of the sofa, not sure if to remove his jacket or not. He clutched his beer like a life line. The voices coming from the kitchen were getting louder and angrier, and much like Freddie that morning Jim wanted to make a run for it while he had the opportunity.

Brian had shown him around their home. A two bed terrace in Kensington. Jim was impressed. He thought it rather sweet that the boys all lived together, and that they were industrious enough at such a young age to make rent.

Freddie had made a brief appearance earlier. He had been fresh out of the shower, hair still dripping wearing just a pair of shorts, clutching a glass of white wine. He had seated himself at the piano and was just about to play when he had realised Jim was sitting there. Rolling his eyes and blushing scarlet, he had stomped into the kitchen to give Brian what for.

Roger came into the room with an “alright mate” when he saw Jim and clinked beer bottles with him, before picking up Brian’s prized guitar for a cheeky strum before he got caught.

Their ears pricked up as they heard a door slam, “…in my home!” screamed Freddie, followed by Brian’s firm “…all I’m asking is that you trust ME!” Followed by angry footsteps on the stairs.

“S’up with Fred?” asked Roger when Brian came into the living room sighing heavily and rearranging the perfectly arranged cushions. Brian tutted and shook his head “Aah, nothing! You know what he gets like when you tell him he’s wrong.”

Roger nodded towards the piano, “His piano is getting lonely”.

The piano was a masterpiece. It was shiny and white, and a grand. Beautiful in its uniqueness… much like it’s owner.

“He’s coming back down in a minute. He’s gone to get dressed,” Brian shook his head again as if willing Roger to shut up.

Roger completely missed the hint. “Dressed? Dressed, our Freddie? I see more of his body than I do of my own!” Roger rolled his eyes “Why does he suddenly need clothes?” Brian shrugged trying to dismiss the subject.

Speaking to no one, Freddie skulked back into the room and sat down at the piano. He was fully
dressed, and made up now, almost as though he was about to go onstage - although a little less flamboyant.

“Are we off out?” inquired Roger, confused by his appearance for a night at home. “I’ve got no money.”

Freddie shook his head quickly and started to play.

He hummed quietly along with a melody that Jim had not heard before at their shows at The Tavern, and neither had the others judging by their reactions.

It was enchanting and rich. Jim listened in awe, being hypnotised by the way Freddie played, his spirit disappearing almost entirely from the room as his passion for the music overtook him, crossing his hands one over the other. The nails on just one hand painted black. Jim would ask him about that later, it could be a conversation starter.

He was mesmerising to watch.

He kept playing the same passage over and over, tutting in frustration, something must not have sounded right in his head. Jim could see it was troubling him.

There was a timid knock on the door and Brian and Roger looked at one another. “Has Deaky lost his key again?”

Brian raised an eyebrow “I dunno.” He jumped up to get the door, and Roger followed him out.

Freddie oblivious to their new arrival continued trying to reflect the sound that was in his head. Jim had played piano when he was young, nothing to the standard of the great Freddie Mercury, but he was familiar with the sequence of notes.

Against his better judgement he walked slowly up to the piano as if trying not to spook a timid animal.

Jim shadowed his hands over the keys indicating to Freddie his intention to show him something, and asking permission without words.

When Freddie nodded, Jim asked “may I?” and leant over him.

Jim had been intending to cover Freddie’s hands with his own, to show him the sequence that Jim thought he was trying to achieve.

The dark bruising that Jim had seen on Freddie’s wrists that morning now nearly covered the backs of his hands. His wrists were also very swollen, and Jim realised it must have been painful for him to play – although he showed no sign, such was his passion.

Jim gently lifted Freddie’s right hand and rested it on the back of his own, pressing down the keys he thought would get the sequence Freddie was after. Jim repeated the sequence a number of times, a number of way with Freddie’s hand resting lighting on his, then he signaled that Freddie should try it himself.

The melody sounded wonderful, so much richer when Freddie played.

Freddie could not bring himself to meet Jim’s eyes, but he did nod thank you, which to Jim was like being handed a hundred pound.
Deaky walked into the room removing his jacket. He slapped Jim’s back lightly, “Alright mate? Brian didn’t mention we had company tonight, but it’s great to see you again. Do you play …like… an instrument? Or would you like to play with this?” Deaky produced a bottle of whiskey from his jacket pocket. It was going to be a good night after all.

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“So…have you ever….kissed a man? Truth or dare?”

Roger had the cheesiest grin on his face, pleased with his question, taking full advantage of Jim’s newness to the group.

Jim sprawled across the sofa, one hand supporting his head, and the other covering his glowing face in response to the embarrassing questions flowing between the boys.

It was obvious they knew each other extremely well, and genuinely liked and respected one another. That said, Roger had set him a less tricky question than he thought he had, and Jim had never been more comfortable coming out to a new group of people.

“Actually, I am gay, so I guess your question is have I ever kissed a woman?” Jim chuckled.

“Hey, don’t you dare start on him” yelled Freddie throwing the cushion he was cuddling vaguely in Roger’s direction.

He knew all too well the sensitivity of coming out as a gay man with the law so recently passed.

Glee came over Freddie’s face, “Or I’ll be forced to tell him about the time you went down on that beauty in Soho” he slapped his thigh loudly “and then discovered she had a cock!!”

Freddie was rolling around the floor laughing kicking his feet.

The mood had become very relaxed as the drink flowed, and Freddie’s natural vivacity had overtaken his caution around Jim. Roger threw the cushion back, and Freddie flung his arms in the air as though defending himself against mortal attack.

“You don’t get an opinion, you let men stick their cock up your arse for fun,” Roger teased affectionately.

Freddie dramatically rolled his head back against the sofa, hair in Jim’s face, eyes rolling back in faux pleasure.

“Oh but I love it darling! You don’t know what you’re missing.” Even Jim balked at that. “You should try it!”

The expression on Roger’s face was priceless.

Much to the group’s united calls of too much information, Freddie continued. “You know your G spot is up there right? Delicious. Oh but I really hate it when….”

Freddie is cut off when Roger put his hands over his ears “lalalalalalalala” he bellowed.

Jim was disappointed. He wanted to know what Freddie hated so he didn’t make the mistake of doing it in his dream of the future.
He inhaled deeply, letting the smell of Freddie’s freshly washed hair intoxicate him more than the single malt in his hand.

John took a sip of his drink, “You’ll get used to them mate. I used to die every time I heard the word cock, now it’s just Freddie and Roger the cock twins – Roger is obsessed with his own, and Freddie with everyone else’s.”

Jim wasn’t really listening, he was running his figures through Freddie’s hair, brushing it back and twisting it behind his ear. Absentmindedly he pressed a kiss to the back of Freddie’s neck.

Brian clocked him and raised an eyebrow, but relaxed when Freddie turned towards Jim, made enormous eyes at him, lowered his voice to a dramatic whisper and said “How big is your cock?” and started cackling again.

“How big is your cock?” Jim’s laughter rumbling in his chest. “The truth is ……drum roll…..I didn’t fully know I was gay until about 5 years ago when I moved to London and was able to actually …ahem….find out. I always seemed to hang out with the delicate boys at school. You know the ones who were very shy, quiet, and couldn’t stick up for themselves?”

Brian’s eyebrows shot up, and he stared openly at Freddie. Freddie aware of the laser inquisition from across the room, ducked his head.

“Mum always said I had a thing for the underdog” Jim roared with laughter “I had a thing alright. I have a protective streak by nature, so with the imminent dangers that is our good gay culture, it was a natural flow into bar security. I mean, it was mainly first aid training, but being naturally tall and solid I usually just have to glare at people – thank God! I don’t enjoy the violence one bit. Of course I get to meet some very manly men in my trade, and when they find out I too am gay, I’m fair game.” Jim laughed blushing to the roots of his dark hair. “I never looked at a woman again.”

Roger grinned and nodded, satisfied with that response and Jim’s openness he said “Jim….your question?”

Jim squeezed Freddie’s shoulder, “I guess you have always known hey?” he asked.

Freddie whipped round to face Jim incredulous “That’s not a question!….and what does that even mean? That I am more gay than you?!” Everyone laughed.

“He means you’re adorable sweet cheeks,” Roger winked.

Freddie blushed and busied himself with the contents of his glass.

Jim fell in love just a little more.

The evening and the drinks flowed well, and before long every person in the room was helplessly drunk, but in very good spirits.

Freddie attempted to stand, and much to Jim’s delight he turned to him and gave him a big hug.

“You’ll get used to that too,” said Deaky. “Fred hugs everyone.”

Making a show of it, Freddie crawled over to Deaky and gave him the biggest smooch on his cheek.
Despite the drink, Deaky was scarlet.

“Right, I’m going to fall into my bed now.” Freddie attempted to do a sweeping bow but over balanced.

“You gave me fame and fortune and everything that goes with it…. I thank you all” he announced to the room at large. “Hmmm…” he wrinkled up his nose “where’s my songbook?” and with that he dramatically danced out of the room.

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Jim handed his empty beer bottles to Brian with a soft smile, picking up his jacket.

“Thank you Brian, for everything. I know you didn’t need to give me another chance.”

“You’re very welcome Jim. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed this evening – so thank you. You seem to have fitted in well too.”

Brian nodded towards Jim’s jacket which was over his arm “Have you got far to go? You can stay on the sofa if you want?”

Jim shook his head, although wanting nothing more than to be near to Freddie.

He spoke softly as though afraid to be heard, “Thank you… but I’m not going to push it. I think I’ve broken down some barriers this evening, and I dread to think what I might be accused of if I’m caught on the landing going to the bathroom” he chuckled.

Brian laughed, “Freddie and Roger share the room at the front, you would have to get passed our scary blond to get to Freddie.”

Jim laughed “Like peas in a pod aren’t they?”

Brian smiled “You have no idea mate!”

“Let him sleep, and I’m hopeful to be invited back?” asked Jim shaking Brian’s hand.

“Anytime mate.”

Jim turned to go, when Brian put a hand on his arm. “Slowly, slowly catchy monkey” he muttered under his breath.

Jim met his gaze with a soft smile.
Chapter Summary

When Jim’s life become further interwoven with the band, he finds himself in a unique position to see beyond the performer.…

Chapter Notes

Lovies, I am very new to fan fic, and I find tagging very difficult. If there's anything that's there and shouldn't be, or anything needs adding, please get in touch. Don't be shy!

Enjoy :)

Despite having been alive for 26 years, Jim had never had a hangover like this. Everything hurt, and he didn’t think his third cup of coffee was helping.

The doorbell ringing was definitely not helping.

Pushing his fist into his throbbing right eye, Jim carefully opened the door.

The sight of Freddie on his doorstep brought him up quick smart. He mentally ran through a list – need a shower, need a shave, need a breath mint.

Freddie being Freddie was fresh as a daisy.

“H..hi” Freddie stammered. “How are you?” So, Freddie was feeling shy today.

He thrust a jacket towards Jim. “I just wanted to say th -thank you for the loan of your jacket yesterday. Erm…sorry…you didn’t really lend it to me. I - just took it, but here it is.”

Jim hadn’t even missed it.

Jim smiled warmly “You’re very welcome.” He opened the door a little wider. “Would you like a cup of coffee?”

Freddie shook his head, hair covering his face a little more. Today, he couldn’t quite meet Jim’s eyes.

“No, thank you, I like tea – I mean – I need to go. We have studio time today.” A beaming smile, a flash of the rock star.

Freddie pointed towards the gate, and Jim noticed the band were in the car.

Freddie handed the jacket over “Thank you again.”

Freddie turned to go, then hesitated. He blushed, eyes to the ground. “I…I just wanted to say, I
spoke to Brian, and I really didn’t mean to make you feel like a bad man. I’m sorry.”

Jim flushed himself. Freddie’s words warmed him from the inside. He knew it would have taken a lot for Freddie to admit he was wrong, and even more to say it out loud.

“Thank you” said Jim softly “It means a lot…and Freddie ….I’m really not.” Freddie nodded and made his way down the path.

*********************************

I’m really not?! I’m really not! Jim echoed to himself. Why didn’t he say anytime, or would you like to meet for a drink later - something that at least indicated to Freddie that he liked him, that he wanted to see him again, get to know him better.

Jim pondered for a moment as he waved them off, but it didn’t take him long to realise exactly why.

He had just met the real Freddie Mercury.

Not the showman, not the inebriated and intoxicating, but the real man, and he could already see the headlines - ‘Rock’s timid front man.’

The version of Freddie that was one stroke from giving Jim a heart attack in the club – drunk Freddie - that one was easy to reach, but would only ever be a quickie down an alleyway.

Jim finally understood why Freddie was never seen with the same man twice - he would know them, but more importantly they would know him, and for some reason he didn’t want them to.

It was this Freddie that Jim needed to know.

The shy Freddie, the deep, reflective, the song writer, the version of himself who was so warm and funny - once you got to know him - also the easiest to scare away.

Jim had been right the first time, this would be a long game. It would be a delicate operation, Jim would be in danger of falling into the friend zone - but my God it would be worth it!

*********************************

Later in the day still with a throbbing head Jim made his way into work. He sensed the atmosphere as soon as he walked in. It was going to be one of those evenings.

His boss was also in that evening. Jim didn’t especially dislike his boss, but he kept a respectful distance. He was not renowned for his tolerance or friendship, and didn’t take kindly to his staff being under the influence, or badly hungover.

No, Jim would have to avoid him today.

About ten minutes into his shift, the phone rang:

“Jim? Jim, hi, it’s Brian. Listen mate sorry to call out of the blue and ask for a favour, but we’re having a problem moving our equipment around all the time, Freddie is being really precious about his piano.” Jim smiled, he could feel Brian rolling his eyes down the telephone. “I know it’s a huge ask, but as we’re coming back to the Tavern next, is there any chance we can store our equipment there?”

“Yes mate, no bother. There’s a locked storage room behind the bar. It’s huge. Full of old bar furniture too so if you’re discreet about it the landlord need never know your stuff is here, he might
try to charge you. Can you come over now before the place packs out?”

“Yes, that’s fantastic. Thank you very much. We really appreciate it.”

“Can you manage?”

“Yeah, we’re all here, and we’ve got Roy our sound engineer who will help us for the cost of a pint. We’ll be about half an hour. Can we park out front?”

“Park round the back, stay out of sight. I’ll come out and help you if it’s not too busy.”

“Can’t thank you enough.”

“It’s no bother mate.”

Jim smiled to himself – they were all there – and coming to the bar.

************************

About an hour later with no discretion the boys arrived with the most enormous crash as the symbols came loose of their tether.

“Shit, fuck, bollocks” screamed Roger looking like he was about to explode. “I told you to put those in the case” he shouted to nobody in particular.

Due to their lateness Jim was already serving a large number of people at the bar, and shrugged his shoulders, helpless to offer a hand. He quickly unlocked the door and pointed them in the general direction of the store room.

Jim realised he had forgotten to mention the steps, and there was a loud outburst when he heard the sound of someone stumbling, followed by the clang of the piano, and an outraged “Watch where you’re going you careless oaf” from Freddie. Jim was torn between amusement, and guilt at not being able to help them.

As luck would have it, the night’s band struck up their first crashing chords blocking out the sound of anything going on in the storeroom. Jim quietly closed the door behind them so they could pack away their instruments undetected by the landlord.

Half an hour later Jim watched as Brian, Deaky and a gentleman that Jim assumed must be Roy filed out from the storeroom, closing the door behind them, and pulling up a stool at the bar. They looked exhausted.

“Jim, allow me to introduce Roy Thomas Baker our sound engineer, Roy this is Jim Hutton. We only met a short time ago, but he feels like one of us.”

Jim felt a blush creep across his face as he shook Roy’s hand. It was nice to be regarded as a friend, especially by someone as pleasant as Brian.

“Three pints of your best please mate, when you are ready?” said Brian.

“Just three?” Jim inquired raising an eyebrow “No Roger or Freddie?”

As if conjured up, Freddie popped up beside Jim, wrapped his arms around his neck, and pulled him down to give him a loud kiss on his cheek.

“Thank you darling! We owe you one.”
Jim wondered what sort of favour he could call in, and blushed scarlet.

“Right, offski” declared Freddie loudly giving each man a huge hug in turn.

“Roger has talked me into going to a regular club tonight. Apparently I’ll get into less trouble.” He flashed his bruised wrists with a cheeky smile. “I hope I don’t pull any women.” He laughed, dramatically raising his hands. “Don’t misunderstand dears, I adore women, but not in my bed.” He feigned a shudder.

“Don’t worry sweetie, the only women you’ll pull are those who wanna run you a bath and cook you a roast.” Jim was almost tempted to turn round to see who had spoken, that sentence most certainly could not have come from his own lips!

Freddie stuck out his tongue playfully, as Roger appeared and high fived Jim.

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Later on the evening went south. The band – who were terrible – had brought their own crowd, the rude and the aggressive.

Jim had been called upon a number of times to assist the door staff with breaking up scuffles.

Brian, Deaky and Roy had long since got bored of being jostled at the bar, and had gone home to work on some more tracks. Jim was relieved to be honest. They were nice people who worked very hard. Too nice for the Market Tavern that evening.

Jim was also glad that Roger and Freddie had left before it all kicked off. They – especially Freddie – seemed to attract trouble, and Jim didn’t feel he could do his job well, and worry about Freddie.

Jim hadn’t forgotten how terrified Freddie had been yesterday morning when he woke up in his bed. That was still a mystery, but at least he had managed to convince Brian that he wasn’t the perpetrator!

Jim was astonished when a very worse for wear Freddie popped up at the bar.

“Jim, darling, thank God you are still here. I’ve misplaced my songbook, please may I check the piano stool?”

“Where’s Roger?” snapped Jim, concern for Freddie being in the bar alone colouring his tone unintentionally.

“Erm…..” Freddie was wavering on his feet, and seemed to be having trouble formulating a sentence. He pointed vaguely in the direction of the door. “He’s got a woman, outside.”

“Please may I have a vodka and tonic when you have a moment?”

Jim really didn’t want to serve him in that state, but at that moment he greeted three men warmly who surrounded him at the bar, it was alright, he wasn’t alone.

Jim watched astonished as Freddie’s entire persona changed the moment his friends arrived.

A beaming smile broke from ear to ear as Freddie’s swung around on his stool, fluttering long eyelashes. The picture of sobriety and control.

“Gentlemen, to what do I owe the pleasure?”
Jim blinked a couple of times, it was as though he had just watched Freddie throw on a new outfit, grow ten feet taller, and change his face.

It dawned on Jim that Freddie didn’t just perform when Queen were playing. He was the consummate actor, and the world was his stage.

The men moved closer surrounding Freddie, trapping him against the bar. One man leaned in close and whispered something into his ear. Freddie didn’t look impressed, and seemed to withdraw a little.

He placed a firm hand on the man’s chest and purred “Now, now dear, that’s assault,” but smiled broadly.

Jim felt the oddest sensation of wanting to leap into action without cause. Thankfully his feet wouldn’t move for fear of making a fool of himself anyway. Freddie clearly knew these people, he was the perfect host, Jim had no reason to feel so uncomfortable. He dismissed his feelings as a little jealousy.

He slammed Freddie’s drink onto the bar directing everyone’s attention onto himself. One of the men put his hand in his pocket, smiled and asked politely “How much mate?”

Just as Jim took the money, a movement in the corner of his eye grabbed his attention. Someone had Chris in a choke hold and was pulling him to the ground, aiming drunken punches at his head.

Another doorman who approached was similarly pulled into the fray. Jim leapt into action ringing the bar bell loudly, a signal known to distract the aggressors momentarily, but also alert all staff that there was a problem.

Jim rushed into the brawling crowd leaving the bar temporarily unoccupied.

Freddie excused himself, and quietly made his way down the steps into the store room.

He paused to allow his eyes to adjust to the low light, then continued to the back of the room where the band had hidden their equipment behind a stack of chairs so as not to be spotted by the landlord.

He couldn’t help but smile when he saw his beloved piano. He was going to miss having it at home. Pulling up the stool lid, he clutched a hand to his chest in relief when he saw his song book. He took a quick look around him to make sure he was alone, tucked a pencil behind his ear, sat down at the piano and started to play.

The melody filled the room instantly. It was warm, and lilting and though not complete, it flowed smoothly from one bar to the next.

“Neptune of the seas, an answer for me please” Freddie hummed softly. He was stuck on a section and stood to get the acoustic guitar. Sometimes he found it easier to compose on an instrument other than his own.

He turned at a sound. The three men from the bar were making their way towards him. One was clapping loudly “That’s beautiful doll. Wanna play some more for us?”

Freddie smiled widely with a bow “Why thank you gentleman, but you aren’t allowed to be back here. If you would like to visit us tomorrow evening we’re playing. I might even have this one finished just for you.”
The man in the center looked to the others, “Nah! We want something now, don’t we boys, something just for us.”
Encounters: The Eye of the Tiger

Chapter Summary

Jim is having a very bad night at work, and is unaware that he is not the only one…but every cloud has a silver lining, and he finally gets Freddie in his arms….or does he….

Chapter Notes

Well lovies you’ve had a few guesses / hopes of what you like to see here, but I don’t think anyone saw this coming …..enjoy!

Oh, there’s a bit of homophobic chatter later on the chapter. It’s typical of the era, but if you are sensitive to it please read with care.

Jim made his way into the store room from the staff entrance with his key. He needed out of this racket. It was bloody dangerous, herding idiots for a living. God knows what he would do instead though. What was offered to an Irish gay man with no qualifications in London that would cover his rent?!

He wiped his hands on a bar towel as he made his way over to the kegs to change the barrel. As he unclipped the hose he heard a commotion.

He looked over to see the backs of three men huddled into a corner. Jim was instantly alert, he knew they should not be there, and this did not look good.

“Oy Baz. Go and guard the door” he heard.

“Why me?” said another man.

“Because I fucking nominated you” was the response.

The man identified as Baz moved away towards the door, and Jim saw a shimmer of silky fabric huddled in the corner.

“I don’t shell out good money for drinks, and get nothing in return.” The speaker shifted, and Jim could see they had Freddie backed into the corner.

From where he stood, Jim could make out Freddie’s body language - he was tense, but not defeated, his face was red, his fists clenched tightly. He was bloody furious!

Not on my watch thought Jim galvanising into action, but he stopped abruptly when he saw Freddie kick out, planting his foot firmly into the groin of one of the men.

The shocked recoil of the recipient gave him the opportunity to swing around planting his fist firmly into the ringleaders nose. His fist was followed by his elbow, which was held high, perfectly placed to follow through.
Jim’s mouth fell open.

He felt the familiar rush of blood in his head; but not from fear, or adrenaline - but from pride. Where the hell had Freddie learnt to do that?!

Jim watched amused as the men; blood dripping from the face of their ringleader, and the other clutching his balls retreated towards the stairs.

“We’ll bloody get you for this.” The man was shaking his fist in anger, but still backing away. “Don’t turn your back in this neighbourhood.”

“Come on then” shouted Freddie.

Jim recognised the stance; the raise of his chin, hips set square, challenge in his eyes. Jim was astounded.

His Freddie was brave!

When the door slammed shut, Freddie sank to the floor thinking he was alone. His head was in his hands as he hunched in the corner trembling.

Jim felt he couldn’t announce his presence at that time, he wouldn’t have known what to say anyway. He couldn’t intrude on the time that Freddie needed to regroup, to feel safe, and alone. Jim could see him taking deep breaths as he calmed.

Finally Freddie lifted his head looking so tired, and Jim felt an ache creep across his chest.

Jim was just about to make his presence felt when the door suddenly swung open.

Freddie was on his feet in seconds, bloodied knuckles hidden behind his back. It was Roger – he was a little late.

“Have you got it Freddie?” Roger called from the doorway. Suddenly Freddie was all smiles, it was like the events of the last few minutes hadn’t even happened!

“Yep, thank God, it’s here” he waved the song book at Roger.

“Cool, listen I’m gonna take Catherine home” Roger winked. “You alright getting home?”

“Yep” said Freddie “I’m gonna hang here for a bit actually, I’m working on something for the show tomorrow.”

“Alright…see you in the morning then….or maybe lunchtime” Roger wiggled his eyebrows and closed the door.

Freddie sank back down onto the piano stool. His smile was gone, his head hanging, defeated. He noticed a speck of blood on his immaculate white outfit and exhaled deeply, saddened.

Jim could not make any sense of what he had seen.

His friend. Roger Taylor. The man closest to him on the planet, and Freddie had put on an act. A brave face. The illusion that he was happy, and fine, and he hadn’t just had to fend off three men twice his size from ….Jim couldn’t even think about it.

Why hadn’t he told Roger? Roger would have been furious. He would have rounded up some lads and gone after the men for threatening his mate. They would have been in it together. Freddie would
have had support.

Did Freddie show anyone his fears, when he was scared, and hurt and sad? Or was everyone held at arm’s length? Just outside of the shell?

Clearing his throat softly so as not to startle Freddie, Jim walked slowly towards him. Hands raised.

“It’s only me” he said softly.

Jim crouched in front of Freddie, hands either side of him on the piano stool and asked “Are you OK?”

Freddie leaned forward slightly and dropped his forehead onto Jim’s shoulder for a minute.

“Yep, I’m fine” he said straightening his spine.

Jim rolled Freddie’s sleeve up, and ran a hand over his elbow checking for damage. He then ran a gentle thumb over his bruised and bloody knuckles.

“You keep running into harsh men” he said softly, trying to get eye contact with Freddie, who was desperately trying to avoid it.

“You need to find someone who will cherish you.”

Freddie laughed humourlessly “Oh, where are they all hiding then darling?”

Jim stuttered. It should have been his moment. He should have leapt right over his own shadow and told Freddie how he felt. Except there was an enormous lump in his throat and he couldn’t bring himself to speak at all.

He wasn’t sure if the onset of his sudden emotional state was due to having rescued his friends from a pack of animals moments ago, or from having witnessed Freddie rescue himself.

What kind of a world did we live in where a kind gentle soul had to defend themselves from attack just for being attractive. Jim couldn’t put that on Freddie, he couldn’t tell him that this animal wanted him too.

What he wanted to do at that moment was take Freddie home, wrap him in an enormous blanket and buy him pets, but Freddie was an adult, he was brave and strong, and deserved Jim’s respect.

Caught at a crossroads Jim settled for slowly pulling Freddie into his arms and holding him close for a minute. He released him and kissed his bloodied knuckles, but couldn’t meet his eyes while there were tears in his own.

“That will sting for a bit” he said instead “but they will heal.”

There was no brave face now, Jim could see his sadness.

Jim suddenly remembered he was on shift.

“Will you be OK here for a while?” he asked. Freddie nodded, and Jim made to walk away.

He felt an overwhelming urge to lock the door behind himself, locking Freddie safe in the store room where he could work on his music without fear of being scrutinised, objectified, or attacked - but he couldn’t do that either. Freddie was a grown man who could clearly look after himself.
He also felt a little indignation – why should Freddie be locked away down here just because some people were shit?! Freddie was a star, and he needed to shine wherever he went, not be hidden away.
Jim was partly relieved when Freddie grabbed his notebook, and ran after him calling “Wait for me.”

Freddie settled himself into a booth nearest to the bar. He tapped his pencil on the table as he composed a few lines in his head before writing them down.

Jim took him a cup of tea in a fine bone china cup and saucer he had found in the kitchen. He thought Freddie needed to sober up, and drink something warm and comforting after his horrible ordeal.

“Thanks Dad!” said Freddie sarcastically, but his eyes sparkled with fun, and when he took his first sip he sighed in contentment.

It would be another couple of hours before the bar started to empty. Jim had been aware of Freddie’s eyes on him as he worked, but every time he looked directly at him, Freddie was looking elsewhere, and Jim thought he might be imagining it.

As the last of the stragglers were leaving, Jim sat at the bar with his reward pint while the cleaners finished up, and Chris - having recovered from his ordeal - cashed up.

Jim looked around shaking his head and whistling. The bar had received a lot of damage tonight. It would cost a fair amount of money to put right, and Jim was hoping not to be around when his boss saw the mess. Despite putting their lives in danger, if there was any lasting damage, the boss always made it known to his staff that they should have done better.

The shimmer of Freddie’s satin top caught the lights as he sauntered over, notebook in hand, pencil tucked behind his ear.

He shimmied his body between Jim and the bar, and despite nearly being in Jim’s lap, he couldn’t meet his eyes.

Jim slid his hands up Freddie’s top seeking warm skin. “Are you OK?” he asked.

Freddie nodded, but Jim could see there was something on his mind.

Jim stroked his thumbs lightly over the skin at Freddie’s waist holding him closer. “What’s up?”

Freddie was looking at him with those eyes. The ones that make you give your puppy another biscuit, even if he’s already had two.

“Please would you take me home?” whispered Freddie.

Jim laughed out loudly “Gladly!” he said. “I thought you’d never ask!”

Freddie rolled his eyes giggling and lightly punched Jim’s shoulder. “I mean, will you take me back to Brian, and Roger and Deaky?”
“I know what you meant honey. I was just joking with you” he gave Freddie a squeeze. “Of course I will.”

He pulled Freddie towards him. This was the moment. Freddie was looking straight at him, but the sass, the haughty challenge was gone. Jim slid his hands up the smooth skin of Freddie’s back and pulled him closer. His soft warm lips were seconds away, when he saw his boss coming around the corner.

He quickly kissed Freddie’s forehead, and dismissed him with a tap to his bottom.

Jim jumped up and dashed quickly behind the bar to help Chris.

His boss jumped up the bar steps in one leap rushing towards Jim “I know what you are Hutton, but I don’t need to see it, puts me off my beer.”

Jim straightened to his full height, bristling.

“I know what we allow in here…” his boss continued oblivious to the atmosphere “…the pink pound is as good as any, but he’s bad news.” He pointed at Freddie who had sat back down in the booth while he waited for Jim.

“He’s far too bloody obvious with his perversions, I thought you would have known better than to get involved with the likes of him.”

Jim held his tongue. “He was just asking for a lift. I know his flatmate. Nothing like what you think.” Jim said coldly.

“That’s what you call it these days is it?! There’s too many of your sort in here at the minute. We’re getting a bad name. Just look at what we’ve had to put up with tonight.”

“To be fair” said Jim “That was the work of the band’s clientele. Most of them were bikers, not fairies.” He spat.

He knew his words would fall on deaf ears, but he was angry. He was used to being spoken to and about like that, but not Freddie, he didn’t deserve it. He’d sat quietly working hard all evening, he’d nearly been assaulted in this bar, the landlord should be on his knees grovelling Freddie’s forgiveness for the corrupted clientele that HE allowed in.

However, Jim knew how to pick his battles, so he said goodnight and switched off the bar lights.

He gestured to Freddie “Come on then sweetheart. I’ll take you home.”

Freddie linked his arm through Jim’s chattering as they walked out into the cool air of the spring evening.

Jim took his car keys out of his pocket and unlocked the door for Freddie. As he turned he saw the men who had threatened Freddie earlier, they were walking towards them, and they meant business.

Suddenly Freddie’s behaviour made sense to Jim. He had spent the whole evening at The Market Tavern sitting alone writing music into a notebook at the bar, when he could have been home.
practicing with his band mates. His very shy uncertain request for Jim to take him home, knowing he would have had to face them alone if he had said no.

Freddie had known all evening that they would wait for him.

Locking Freddie safely in the car Jim turned to face them.

He was in no hurry, he’d been dying to knock the fuck out of these three all night, but when he saw Freddie’s posture through the glass; tense, sad, fraught, waiting for more inevitable violence, Jim couldn’t do it to him.

He did the next best thing to humiliate the men – after being bestest by a feather weight that is – he tipped his head back and laughed.

As the men approached aggressive and red faced, Jim said through his laughter “I guess it really is the fight in the dog. He took all three of you.” Still chuckling he started the engine and drove away.

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The drive home was harmonious, and Jim felt it had made the whole sordid evening worthwhile.

He finally had Freddie to himself. He could talk to him, and Freddie was talking back.

Freddie had been impressed with Jim’s thoughtfulness, with ignoring his own desire to pulverise the men, and instead focus on how Freddie was feeling, and as a consequence he was relaxed and all smiles again.

He confided in Jim that he’d had boxing lessons at school, and how he had won trophies just by sheer determination, and not giving up no matter how much the punches hurt.

They laughed about the places Jim had caught people having sex at The Market Tavern, Freddie shyly revealed a number of places he himself had been caught having sex.

When there was a comfortable silence, Jim carefully broached the subject of Freddie’s behaviour earlier. He was on to a good thing, he didn’t want to make Freddie uncomfortable.

“You know – you don’t have to be all vulnerable boyish persona with me you know Freddie. If you want something, you just have to ask, I will do it for you, whatever you need.”

Freddie feigned confusion. The picture of innocence “Not sure what you mean darling” he said lightly shaking his head.

Freddie turned to look out of the window watching the houses pass. Both of them were counting their lucky stars as they raced towards home.

Jim looked down surprised when a warm hand cover his own.
Encounters: A Night In

Chapter Summary

Queen are benched for the evening after The Market Tavern is closed for repairs. They have no money to go out, and are bored. They will have to make their own entertainment…..

Chapter Notes

My God! Over 1000 hits, you guys are brilliant! Thank you so much :)

Lovies, there is smut in this chapter. If you don’t want to read smut, please be aware that you may wish to stop reading at the point at which it begins – it will be clear to you. For those who enjoy reading smut, enjoy!

“Now what?!’’ Roger was not a happy man. He threw his jacket onto the back of the chair in the living room and flopped down into it. “We needed that money too.”

Brian picked up Roger’s jacket and hung it on the peg in the hallway.

The Market Tavern had been closed for repairs, and Jim felt terrible that Queen’s show had been cancelled. Although not responsible for the damage caused the previous night, Jim had promised them the gig.

“I wanted to use my new piano.” Freddie was pouting. “I nearly had the solo in White Queen perfect this morning. I perform better when everyone is watching me.”

“We know!” They all said in unison, rolling their eyes.

“What do you mean?” one hand clasped to his chest in faux surprise. “Can’t beat an audience” he winked. Nobody was sure if he was still talking about the solo.

John came in with some beers handing one to each of them.

“Truth or dare?” There was a twinkle in Roger’s eye.

“We’re not measuring cocks again!” said John. Jim’s eyebrows hit the ceiling.

“Trivial Pursuit?” suggested Brian

“Scrabble?” said Freddie.

More groans “You always fucking win. Seriously Jim don’t get roped into Scrabble with Freddie and Brian. Who in their right mind would play Scrabble with a lyricist?!”

Brian stooped to drag the coffee table to the center of the room, unfortunately finding himself eye
level with Freddie’s crotch. He was still wearing his show costume – a figure suffocating white leotard.

Brian covered his eyes, “Fred….go and get changed please.”

Freddie giggled “Hey that’s my rise to fame you’re addressing. If you have got it, show everybody.” There was a fresh round of groans.

“Jim, make yourself comfortable mate. When Freddie comes down he’ll get comfy on the sofa” Brian winked.

Taking off his shoes Jim settled back onto the sofa taking a sip of his beer.

“Music or TV?” asked Roger.

“Ooh pass us the paper mate, I think there’s a space documentary on this evening” said Brian.

“Kill me now!” Roger laughed good naturedly. They had all had their fill of Brian’s space obsession, and had all been caught at one time or another when Brian needed a proof reader for his college work.

Freddie re-entered the room wearing a floral kimono tied loosely at the waist. His hair was brushed out, all traces of makeup gone, and he was carrying a brightly coloured blanket under one arm. He could have been mistaken for an Arabian Ifrit.

Jim had to double take. He loved the many sides there were to Freddie, he never knew which Freddie he would get, but this was a new one. One minute the devil incarnate, then a whirling dervish, then a heavenly angel singing at the piano, now a tired little boy clutching a blanket.

“Freddie, I have to know….how old are you?” asked Jim cautiously with a raised eyebrow.

Freddie looked affronted, he held up the blanket and said “I’m getting comfortable, it’s not a fucking teddy bear!”

“No, no, no” Jim held his hands up, he had meant no harm.

Brian shook his head trying to silence Jim “Freddie is sensitive about his blanket mate.”

“No, I didn’t mean….hadn’t even noticed the blanket….I was just curious….like …you are at university yeah?” Jim stuttered.

He was actually more concerned about Freddie being above the age of consent than a blanket….or a teddy bear for that matter…that was just sweet.

Freddie appeared to have lost the power of speech and lowered his head.

Brian answered for him “We’re all at university, I’m astrophysics, Roger is dentistry, Deaky electronic engineering, and Freddie is 21, and has just graduated from Ealing School of Art with Honours” Brian sounded like a proud parent.

“As you can see by our stage costumes, he is putting his qualification to great use. Freddie and Roger have a clothing stall on Kensington market too. They have some very stylish pieces Jim, you should wander down at the weekend.” Brian winked discreetly, he was trying to smooth Freddie’s ruffled feathers.

Freddie perched delicately on the end of the sofa at the furthest edge from Jim who felt like the
temperature in the room had dropped, and he wanted the sunshine back.

Loud music suddenly blasted into the room from the TV.

“Top of the Pops” shouted Roger suddenly more inspired by the thought of a night in.

They all plopped down into their chosen seats and exchanged their opinions on the latest singles, singers and costumes, and of course Queen were better than the lot of them.

“Are there any more beers?” Freddie inquired. “You beer?? It’s not Crystal you know” Roger sneered.

“Hmmm I just fancied one” Freddie wrinkled his nose looking for a beer. Jim reached over to the table and passed Freddie the last bottle.

“Thank you” he smiled sweetly, and it was as though the blanket conversation had never taken place.

As they settled down to watch the space documentary, Jim watched Freddie physically relax. He tucked his feet up under him, curling into a little ball with his head back against the sofa. Blanket wrapped around him.

After a little time his head rolled back as his eyes kept closing. When he rolled onto Jim’s shoulder a couple of time, he patted the empty space alongside his legs and said to Jim “You can put your feet up if you like.”

Jim stretched his long legs out beside Freddie’s, trapping him against the sofa back.

“Watch him mate” said Roger. “He’s very cuddly is our Freddie, he’ll be dry humping you next.”

Freddie sniggered into his bottle of beer. Thrusting his tongue in and out of the bottle neck, one eye on Roger.

“For the education level in this room, the tone is always just south of the gutter.” said Jim chuckling loudly.

Feeling bold, Jim placed a large hand on each of Freddie’s shoulders and pulled him back against his chest. When Freddie didn’t protest, Jim wrapped his arms around him and encouraged him to rest his head on his shoulder.

“Is that OK? ” Freddie smiled and nodded, poking his tongue out at Roger.

Jim jumped awake not sure where he was. The TV was now a fuzzy screen with a dot in the middle, the programmed shows having finished for the night.

He looked around the room for a clock, it was a little before midnight. All the boys were sleeping
awkwardly in their chairs. John was in such a position that Jim doubted he would ever walk again. There would be some stiff necks tomorrow.

The only person awake was Freddie who was stretched out on his back staring at the ceiling.

Jim watched his face in fascination. He was a million miles away, breathing softly and barely blinking.

Jim stroked his thumb gently down Freddie’s prominent cheekbone to get his attention.

“What are you thinking about?” he whispered softly. Freddie smiled, but didn’t reply.

He had such a look of vulnerability about him tonight snuggled up in the blanket. Jim couldn’t believe this was the same Freddie who had beaten up two men yesterday, or who blasted out rock music to a hungry crowd, or had possessed him to masturbate in a club toilet for that matter.

After a couple of minutes of silence Freddie said “I’m very comfortable.” He smiled “I should go to bed, but I don’t want to move.”

Jim chuckled “You don’t have to, just close your eyes, you’ll go to sleep.”

It didn’t feel right to be this close to Freddie and not be touching him. The balance of the universe was off kilter somehow. Jim couldn’t have predicted getting to this point at all given the events of the past few days. He felt like the luckiest man alive. So near, and yet not quite near enough.

Closing his own eyes, Jim felt his hand move as though drawn by a magnetic force. He ran the soft pads of his fingers over Freddie’s collar bone absentmindedly as though trying to soothe him.

Dark traces of the bruise were left from the bite mark on Freddie’s neck, but it had faded a lot. Jim carefully traced his fingers over it, as though trying to erase it. His feelings very mixed. He knew that Freddie was promiscuous, it was a part of his fun nature, but he wondered why he let men hurt him like that.

As Jim continued his gentle exploration Freddie sighed deeply and snuggled closer towards the heat of Jim’s body. It was nice to feel the hum of human touch. Slow careful fingers, no pressure, but not quite tickling either, drawing circles on his chest weaving in and out of the hair.

Jim open his eyes a peep and whispered “Is that OK?” Freddie’s answer was a slow nod and a sigh. Time was in no hurry as Jim lazily worked his fingers over a nipple then zig zagging over his chest to the other, and following the line of his rib cage.

Freddie inhaled deeply, stretching a little.

“You like that huh?” Jim smiled. He swirled his fingers further down Freddie’s stomach drawing sweeping curves, never speeding up or increasing the pressure.

He swept his hand across Freddie’s waist. The skin prickled into goose bumps and Freddie inhaled sharply. Jim retraced his steps, running circles over his stomach watching for the same reaction. He was rewarded with a rash of goose bumps creeping up his skin.

Freddie shivered.

Jim raised him head up onto his elbow, eyebrows raised with a cocky smile “There’s a tender spot there somewhere” Freddie pouted and grabbed Jim’s hand as he went to do it again.
Laughing softly Jim pressed a kiss to Freddie’s cheek. “It’s just a little pleasure, don’t stress”.

“What time is it?” Roger looked like a zombie raising from the dead as he stretched out looking at for clock. “I’m going to bed.”

As if an imaginary alarm had triggered, Brian and Deaky also woke up and started to gather their empty bottles and discarded clothes.

“Is he asleep?!” Roger sounded shocked trying to look over Jim’s back at Freddie. Jim shook his head and put his finger to his lips to quieten Roger. He wanted to keep Freddie relaxed and close to him for a little while longer.

“He never sleeps anywhere but his bed. Are you sure?” Roger raised an eyebrow.

Jim chuckled “Well if he was asleep he’s not now! He’s just relaxing.”

Roger raised his voice even more “Freddie I’m going to bed are you coming?”

“Not yet, I’ll be up in a bit darling” Freddie whispered.

Roger not quite believing that Freddie was choosing to lie anywhere but bed continued “Are you sure, I’m going now? Are you sure you’re OK?”

Jim wasn’t sure what was behind this weird bed ritual, but said to Freddie “You had better show him that I haven’t murdered you” he laughed.

Freddie raised his head and waved at Roger. “I’m fine love. I’m coming in a bit.”

Roger looked at Brian, who looked at Deaky. They all said good night and made their way up the stairs.

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Glad of the peace finally Jim laid his head back down beside Freddie and reprised his gentle assault on Freddie’s senses.

Leaning into his touch, the tie of Freddie’s robe caught under his body and fell open revealing the skimpy white thong beneath that Jim assumed had been under his stage costume. The thong did nothing to cover Freddie as two things became apparent to Jim – Freddie was very aroused, and very well endowed.

Both men laughed as they became aware of what had happened.

Jim rolled his eyes “Freddie! That cannot be considered underwear. It covers nothing!”

Heat rolled into Jim’s stomach as he felt his own answering reaction. God, he was beautiful. His skin glowed a honey colour and the downy hair thickened all the way down. There wasn’t an extra pound on him anywhere.

Jim had done his best. Tried to be his friend. Tried to keep his distance while being ever present, tried not to raise his suspicions or make him feel scared like he had promised Brian, but a man could be driven mad.

“Want me to relieve that for you?” Jim couldn’t believe his own words.

Freddie grinned “I thought you would never ask.”
Jim nudged him “Cheeky.”

Both men moved at once, but Jim pressed Freddie back down with a firm hand to his chest.

Without a word he sat back on his knees and shuffled Freddie up the sofa, lifting his head and popping a cushion underneath.

“Relax. Close your eyes” Freddie couldn’t, but at least he stayed lying down this time.

Settling between Freddie’s legs, Jim slipped his fingers beneath the waistband of his thong to remove it.

“Is this OK?” he whispered.

Freddie cracked open one eye “How else are we gonna fuck darling?!”

Jim slowly pulled the underwear down Freddie’s thighs and calves, slipping it over his feet, swinging it around his finger, tutting, and throwing it over the back of the sofa. Freddie giggled. It was Brian’s turn to clean up tomorrow.

Jim grasped Freddie’s hips lightly and begin drawing soft circles on his sharp hip bones with his thumbs, while kissing down his stomach.

He loved the way Freddie’s body reacted to every light touch, and wondered about the men who had gone before him.

Had they all been cruel and punishing?

“My God” Freddie jumped up again “you’re making me crazy” he laughed in frustration.

Jim laughed and pushed him back down again “Relax. For the passive partner, you’re very active.”

Before Freddie could come back with another smart comment Jim licked slowly from the base of his aroused cock. That shut him up. Freddie’s head fell back as he gasped, his back arched off the sofa. Jim tried not to smile at how reactive Freddie was to every sensation.

Jim felt like he had waited for ever for this moment, but he was in no rush, he was going to savour every second.

He flicked his tongue lazily over the head, taking Freddie deeper and deeper into his mouth, while rubbing slow circles onto the sensitive skin of his stomach.

Freddie was lost in the pleasure, his face flushed, eyes closed, head back and those delicious sounds that Jim had heard in the club bathroom leaving his lips.

Freddie could feel the heat and intensity increasing as Jim found his rhythm up and down, hot, wet and firm, and with those flicks of the tongue just in the right spot to make Freddie groan. Freddie, unable to still his hips was thrusting into Jim’s mouth, and Jim was taking it all.

Jim could see the rippling of Freddie’s muscles as the pressure built.

Freddie couldn’t be quiet now, and he moaned loudly with every stroke. Jim loved hearing those moans as he lost all thought. He briefly wondered what the boys could hear upstairs, but for once in his life he didn’t care if Freddie could be heard ten doors down.

Freddie grabbed at Jim’s shoulders, digging his fingers in deep. “Jim…I’m gonna…” Freddie’s
words were lost on the next moan as his body started to shudder. Freddie grabbed at Jim’s hair trying to pull him away, but his body had other ideas and he thrust deeply into Jim’s mouth.

Jim realising that Freddie was trying to stop himself from coming in his mouth, wrapped his arms under Freddie’s thighs, grasped his hips firmly and pulled him as deep as he could take into his mouth making him absorb all the pleasure.

Freddie cried out as he spilled over the edge, wave after wave. Jim watched as the pleasure coursed through Freddie’s body. He lay back gasping, his arm covering his face, beads of sweat on his beautiful body, eyes closed.

Jim smiled, the pleasure was all his.

He laid back down beside him, pulling Freddie’s satisfied body into his arms. He wished he’d have had the foresight to remove his own clothes so he could feel Freddie’s skin next to his.

Gotcha thought Jim. All soft and defenseless in my arms.

Freddie recovered quickly though, and was soon fiddling with Jim’s belt “Got any lube?”

Jim laughed, but pushed Freddie back down “No darling. No need. I didn’t plan this. That was to help you relax.”

Freddie looked confused, and a little hurt “You don’t want to fuck me?” his voice was very small as though struggling to speak through pain.

Freddie had no idea how much Jim wanted to fuck him. He wanted to flip him over right now, but Freddie deserved better.

Jim measured his next words carefully. He didn’t want to scare Freddie, or make him feel stupid.

“When the time is right, I will make love to you, not fuck you, do you understand the difference?” he asked softly.

Jim watched Freddie’s defenses lock around his heart.

If he could pull his stupid words back and swallow them down, he would in a heartbeat.

“Fuck off” Freddie turned his back on Jim and pulled his blanket tightly around his body.

Jim didn’t know what to do with his hands. He settled with touching Freddie’s shoulder lightly, unsure if he would be rebuffed. “Honey, I didn’t plan this evening. I just wanted to spoil you a bit – make you feel good.”

“Have you got a problem downstairs?” Freddie snapped. Jim pushed his erection hard into Freddie’s back willing him to feel just how badly he wanted him.

It had the opposite effect. “Well in that case it’s just me you don’t want then” Freddie jumped up swooshing his blanket and marched from the room.

“Lock the door behind you” he said over his shoulder.

“Freddie, honey, you’ve got it wrong, let me make it right” Jim called after him, but he was gone.

Jim was absolutely mortified. He’d never seen Freddie like this, especially about sex. He was always so flirty and playful - even after being used by strangers in public toilets. Jim didn’t understand what
he had done to cause such a reaction.

He’d been slow, caring, considerate, checking Freddie was OK with everything he was doing. To Freddie sex was a joke, a game, and Jim had no idea why he was suddenly so hurt by it.

Devastation washed over Jim, whatever the reason for Freddie’s pain, he had wielded the tool.

Of all the dregs in life that Freddie allowed to touch his body, Jim had been the one to crush his spirit.
Encounters: Revenge is...Short Lived!

Chapter Summary

The Queen boys come together to support Jim as Freddie slips out of his hands. He doesn’t know what he’s done, but he does knows what he can do when he catches up with Jim Connors…

Chapter Notes

Oh poor Jim! He thought his dreams had come true. I’m sure part of him is smiling on the inside 😊

Lovies – some of you have been looking for answers, others for revenge …..enjoy!

Jim didn’t feel much better the following night either. Thankfully it was Sunday, and the few people who were in the Market Tavern wanted to chat quietly nursing their drinks.

Jim dropped his head into his hands as he recounted selected parts of the sorry tale to Brian and Deaky, expressions of sympathy on their faces.

“I’m not sure what upset him the most, the part where I told him I didn’t wanna shag him – which can I just say I really do – or the part where I might have said I loved him!” Jim raised his hands in Brian’s direction, still hearing the cautionary words he had used the day Jim had confided that he wanted a relationship with Freddie.

“You should have seen his face. He wasn’t just offended you know, he was so hurt he could barely speak. I still don’t even know what I did wrong, and believe me it’s all I’ve thought about!”

Deaky’s brow furrowed. “See, I don’t get Freddie though, what’s not to love? He remembers everyone’s birthday, has tea with his Mum every Thursday, and cuddles up in a blanket every night in front of the TV, but he only ever seems to feel love when he’s fucked hard over a bar.”

That was a very long colourful speech for Deaky, but it was on point, and all three nodded.

“What’s the story behind the blanket?” asked Jim. Recounting another time he had put his foot in it with Freddie.

“Unsolved mystery” said Brian taking a long sip of his pint. “It came with him. He doesn’t talk about it, and if anyone asks him about it, he shuts down, so we leave it. We figured it’s not a big deal.”

Jim turned to Deaky “You mentioned Freddie’s Mum – is he close to his family?”

“I don’t know. Freddie is an enigma - even to us. I’m never met his parents. I don’t think they even speak English. He has a sister who is very cool. Rog has a thing for her…” Brian chuckled “…but I don’t think their father approves of our blond Lothario.”
“Roger is the Freddie whisperer mate” added Brian, “you would have to ask him. He might be prickly though, want to know why you want to know, but he has known him a lot longer than us. They’ve had the fashion stall together since before we even formed the band, and he’s always shared a room with Roger.”

“I’m glad we have Roger” said Deaky staring into his pint. “If Freddie ever goes missing, Rog will go into all these dives until he finds him. He doesn’t leave until he has Freddie with him – drunk, stoned, fucked so hard he can’t walk, but always smiling - and Roger won’t leave without him, even if he has to drag him out in full pout. I feel like I want to cover my eyes and apologise when I go in those places.” Deaky shuddered.

The flow of beer stopped, and Jim headed out back to change the barrel.

Roger sat down at the bar, scowling. “Here’s the man of the hour” said Deaky putting a pint in front of him.

Brian noticed that Roger wasn’t his usual sunny self “What’s up mate? You look like you’re chewing a wasp.”

“I’m looking for that twat Jim. I’m having him tonight.” Roger was furious.

Brian and Deaky looked puzzled, and wondered what on earth Freddie had told him. Both leaned onto their elbows and peered at Roger wanting to know more.

“He went out back, he won’t be long.”

Roger jumped off his stool as though squaring up for a fight. “What’s he doing behind the bar?”

“Working!” said Brian and Deaky in unison.

Deaky continued “What has he done to you anyway?”

Roger turned to Deaky and said “Why? What do you know about it?”

A very confused Deaky said quietly “What? That Jim wants to fuck Freddie?”

“He didn’t fuck him!” shouted Roger. “Fred told me he didn’t, though he had ample opportunity, that twat after he tried to throttle him to death.” Roger snapped.

“Throttle him? What are you on about? Jim wants to fuck Freddie” repeated Deaky as though Roger was slow.

Jim popped back through into the bar chuckling at the last of Deaky’s sentence. “Oh yes, Jim wants to fuck Freddie” he repeated in the third person. Brian sniggered.

Roger continued, irritated “Well he might want to, but I just told you, Freddie said he didn’t! God you’re slow tonight. Haven’t you seen that mark on his neck? Jim held him down and did that right before he rammed drugs down his throat.”

Jim went pale. “I didn’t do that, I didn’t touch Freddie! Not with my hands anyway, I gave him a blow job.”

Everyone turned to look at Jim, mouths hanging open. Jim glowed with embarrassment.

“What’s wrong with me, why can’t I shut up?!” cried Jim mortified. He didn’t usually kiss and tell.
“You didn’t mention that you gave him a blow job!” said Brian, eyebrows raised.

“You gave Freddie a blow job? He did not tell me that!” Roger wanted to know more, his anger forgotten.

“I told you Jim wants to fuck Freddie” said Deaky with a twinkle in his eye.

“Nobody tells me anything around here” said Roger turning to Jim eyebrows raised “You want to fuck Freddie? ….does Freddie know??” Rogers eyes lit up when he thought he had gossip.

Everyone groaned “Slow isn’t he!” said Deaky.

Brian slammed both hands onto the bar. “Yes, yes, yes, we’ve ascertained that Jim wants to fuck Freddie…” Jim was dying right now “…but what are you on about Rog?” said Brian looking very confused.

“How many times do I need to repeat this story?!” He couldn’t understand why his band mates weren’t as cross as he was. “Did you see that mark on Freddie’s neck? Jim Connors did that, drugged him and then strangled him unconscious at Heaven the other night. He woke up in some groupie’s bed. Frightened him to tears. You know Fred doesn’t sleep out. He couldn’t remember for ages and then it all came flooding back to him.”

Roger pointed at Jim as the groups confusion dawned on him “I didn’t mean our Jim stupid, I know he didn’t do that to Freddie. I meant Jim Connors!”

Jim and Brian stared at each other as the light came on.

“Nobody tells me anything around here” said Brian mentally ordering this new information.

He pointed at Jim as he continued. “Jim took Freddie home the other night, said he was out of it. Freddie was very upset when he got home the next morning. Even tea didn’t calm him straight away. He thought Jim was a crazed fan who had kidnapped him!”

“You were the groupie?” asked Roger pointing at Jim “Is that when you gave him the blow job?”

Everyone groaned.

“No!!!!” growled Jim. “I found Freddie asleep on the sofa in Heaven. I took him home to keep him safe. I’m not a groupie!” He shook his head annoyed. “Freddie woke up very confused. I just thought he was drunk. I’m gonna fucking kill Connors!” he roared.

Although the band hadn’t known Jim very long, they suddenly didn’t recognise the man who transformed before them. They could see why the Market Tavern hired their sweet, gentle friend for security – when it came to his friends, Jim was fierce!

Jim stuck his head around the door “Chris, watch the bar.” It wasn’t a question.

He turned to Roger “Is he here tonight – Connors? Don’t normally see his type in here.”

“Yes, I saw him come in from a distance. I tried to catch him, but he disappeared, probably skulking in corners looking for school kids.” said Roger pumping himself up for trouble.


Brian and Deaky looked at one another, shrugged and turned to their pints.
Jim and Roger found Connors – as accurately predicted by Roger - in a dark corner. He was surrounded by his usual crowd of loud men, all were in raucous spirits.

Connors was sitting on the edge of the sofa with playing cards in his hands. Jim, totally undeterred walked through the middle of the group of men, grabbing Connors by his shirt and pushing him back against the sofa.

Connors was more amused than concerned. He smiled widely and slowly.

Roger stepped down hard on his foot.

“Hey boys, to what do we owe the pleasure? If it isn’t my name sake?” he drawled locking eyes with Jim.

“You know exactly what you did!” shouted Roger in his face.

Connors feigned thinking, forefinger on his chin, his smile brightening when he visualised the night he had run into Freddie.

“You found your little mate. Did he tell you how much fun we had? He’s plucky. Tasted good.” He turned to address Jim “I would keep your little songbird locked up Daddy, he came looking for some good loving.”

“Funny, Fred said you couldn’t get it up” said Roger. A few of the lads snorted.

Connors frowned, and speaking slowly as though Roger was thick he said “We didn’t even fuck.”

Jim had been in this game long enough to know that he had to get something good on Connors if he was going to get him out of Freddie’s way permanently. So he kept his cool, and he bided his time.

“What did you give him?” Jim asked firmly. The smile temporarily sliding from Connors’ face.

“I didn’t give him my cock if that’s what you mean.” Connors grinned “A proper man was all a bit much for your princess, dumb fuck fainted before we got any good action, ruined my game. He attracts a bit too much attention if you know what I mean. People started looking, I left him on the sofa.” Connors raised his hands with a slow grin. “No harm done.”

“What did you give him?” Jim repeated slowly.

The lads around Connors started to look a little shifty when they realised that Jim wasn’t giving up.

Connors met Jim’s gaze.

Jim grabbed Connors’ face “You deaf? I said, what did you give him?”

One of Connors’ mates pushed Jim who temporarily lost his balance. Quickly recovering, but not quickly enough to stop Connors making a run for it.

Surprisingly Deaky grabbed him and slammed him up on the wall.

“What did you do to Freddie?” Deaky looked more shaken than Connors, and now that he had him, didn’t have a clue what to do with him.

Two security men approached who had spotted the group looking more than a little shifty, when they
spotted Jim in the thick of it.

“You alright Jim?” Jim turned and waved his arm to indicate to the entire group “Remove all of them – this one for life.” He grabbed Connors’ shirt. “You might want to search him first for drugs too.”

Connors threw a punch connecting with Jim’s jaw.

It was all the excuse Jim had been looking for.

He drove his fist hard into Connors’ ribs, and all hell broke loose.

Jim resumed his post at the end of the bar, head returned into his hands, an ice pack pressed to his bruised jaw, and a wet bar towel across his knuckles.

“I don’t think I’ve ever started a fist fight” he said. “I’ve finished a few. Hopefully word will get around that Connors has been drugging the patrons. Other bar managers will watch him too. People are suspicious enough of gay bars, without throwing drugs into the mix. Everyone knows he’s bad news, it’s just getting something to pin on him.” Jim sighed and shook his head sadly. “We can’t keep Freddie completely safe though.”

“Especially not from himself!” said Deaky. Everyone agreed.

“Don’t worry, Freddie won’t be messing with Connors again. It really scared him.” said Roger.

“No, but he’s only a little thing. Connors obviously overpowered him.” The thought of what could have happened made Jim run cold. He suddenly understood what had happened that morning when Freddie had woken in a terrible fright. He must have been in a drugged haze all night. Poor thing must have been terrified. Jim mentally chastised himself for not being more considerate of how Freddie must have been feeling.

“Don’t let Freddie hear you say that” said Roger “He’s a trained boxer. Connors must have taken him by surprise.”

“I know” Jim chuckled. “I’ve seen him in action.”

As though summoned, Freddie appeared at the end of the bar.

“Hey all of you beautiful people.” Jim looked up from feeling sorry for himself, and felt the air knocked out of him.

Freddie looked dazzling. He was wearing skin tight black jeans which were so tight he must have had an alternative air supply, a broad belt on his tiny waist, and a sparkly top, low cut and wrapped over.

His hair was fluffed out and so shiny it took on a blue shimmer in the bar lighting. His beautiful eyes wide and bright, heavily lined with black liner. Jim felt the sparkle in those eyes could have lit up the room.
On the end of his hand was a much paler man. Similar in colouring to Jim except he had sandy blonde hair.

The man wrapped his arms around Freddie’s waist drawing him close to his chest.

Freddie glanced at Jim “What happened to you dear?” he asked before waving his hand to get the attention back onto himself.

“Everybody, I’d like to introduce you to my friend here…..” The man whispered in Freddie’s ear making him giggle “…..he has offered his very professional service to manage our band” Freddie clapped “oh…and he’s going to manage me too” Freddie blushed, and was squeezed from behind.

“I’d like to introduce…. Paul Prenter.”

There was a resounding thud as Jim’s head hit the bar. Brian patted his back in commiseration.
Encounters: Sleeping on the Sidewalk

Chapter Summary

With Paul Prenter as their manager, Jim and the Queen boys head off to do their first gigs outside of London. Freddie is distraught when there is an equipment malfunction—can Jim save the show, and be his hero?

Chapter Notes

Thank you for your continued support lovies.

If there was one thing that Jim couldn’t deny, it was that in the last month Queen had got more gigs, and better venues with Paul Prenter as their manager.

Following a number of very successful appearances in larger venues around the capital, the band had set off for a three night stint in the north west of England; one night at the Apollo in Manchester, followed by two nights at the Empire in Liverpool.

Both venues had capacities into the low thousands as opposed to hundreds, Queen had a tour bus, and a road crew.

Jim couldn’t help wondering how Prenter had become so connected.

It was the first time that any of them had ventured that far north; with the exception of Jim, and Paul himself who had spent short periods of time in Liverpool following their arrivals from Ireland some years ago. The excitement was palpable, and Jim thought Paul might do Freddie an injury if he asked once more if they were nearly there yet.

As for Jim, he had been both proud and honoured when Brian had asked him to join the band on their first mini tour of the UK.

It had all happened very quickly and quite unexpectedly, when Jim’s boss has reminded him that he was the only member of staff that had not yet taken any annual leave.

The timing couldn’t have been better.

The only thorn in Jim’s side was Prenter himself.

It was to be expected that Jim would not like Prenter. Freddie was sitting on his lap, trying to sneak glances at his poker hand, and scattering sweet kisses along his jaw.

It wasn’t that - or it wasn’t just that.

The man was sly and secretive. He took far too much interest in what everyone else was doing, without ever giving anything of himself away.
Poker would most certainly be Prenter’s strong suit.

The very first night at the Market Tavern, Jim could feel Prenter’s eyes burning into him as though trying to weigh him up. He asked far too many questions about Jim’s life, his work, and his relationship with the band. Jim didn’t feel he needed to answer any of his questions, frankly it was none of Prenter’s business.

He also thought Prenter was totally the wrong fit for Freddie – he would think that - but despite Freddie being manipulative, demanding, and - well frankly - a diva, he was genuine and sincere, kind, gentle and affectionate, all the things that Prenter was not.

If he was being objective, Jim could see a reasonable business relationship blooming, but a terrible personal one between the two men.

Jim was learning so much more about Freddie by working closely with him – albeit if from a distance.

Freddie, it seemed, had the attention span of a humming bird, if something didn’t happen right now, then he would flit off to the next thing until he got the nectar.

Jim wondered how long it would be before Freddie realised he wouldn’t get any sweetness from Paul Prenter.

Jim smiled to himself as Freddie shuffled again. The journey – figuratively and literally - to fame and fortune was killing him.

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Back stage was an absolute shambles with frayed nerves, raw energy, hairspray and glitter.

The only sane person appeared to be Brian, but even he was tunelessly strumming his guitar as though afraid it might stop working before the show.

Deaky had long since given up trying to be sociable, and was hiding out in the roadie’s room with his Walkman on.

Freddie was a nightmare ball of fear, angst and panic before a show, and Deaky couldn’t stand to see him like that.

Deaky was the shyest member of the band, who had to psyche himself up just to go on stage at all. It did him absolutely no good to watch their front man falling apart.

Roger was being his typical self, surrounded by woman, but even he had popped back to tune the drum set for the second time already today.

Brian had never seen anyone tune drums before he had met Roger.

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Jim had made himself useful assisting the two roadies supplied by Prenter to get the equipment set up on stage, and the lighting rig in place.

For the first time he got a sense of Queen’s ambition. This was the makings of a theatrical performance, not a rock show. From the sheer size of the stage itself, he just knew the evening was going to be awesome.

Due to the complexities of moving Freddie’s piano yet again from Kensington, it had been confirmed with both venues that they each had a piano on site that the band could use. They just needed to move it into the right place, and fire away.

Freddie had been appalled at their terminology, and their complete disregard for his most prized possession.

Jim popped backstage to let the band know that everything was ready and to wish them luck.

He spotted Freddie in the middle of the room.

He looked sensational.

It never failed to amaze Jim the transformation that came over Freddie before and after a show. He appeared ten feet tall, a vision of maturity and confidence. Not a peep of the man who was nervous to ask for help, or was setting out his blanket in front of the TV.

The effect of his back combed hair, all messy like he’d spent the afternoon being fucked every which way, the carefully applied eyeliner that meant the colour, softness and intensity of his brown eyes hit the back of the room. The slicked lips that Jim would have killed to kiss right now, and that was before he got onto his outfit.

Freddie was wearing a black catsuit with the occasional diamantes sewn expertly in place by the man himself. The fabric clung to every curve of his slender figure. The part that hit Jim front and center was the strategically placed zip just under his naval. Now if he could just get teeth to that zip…..

Hang on.

Something was wrong.

Freddie was standing in the middle of the room staring into space. His eyes were wide and wild, his arms wrapped around himself protectively.

Jim approached him “Freddie?” Freddie was looking through him, he didn’t appear to register Jim at all. His breath was coming in short ragged gasps, his body was shaking like he couldn’t get warm, and he was barely holding back tears.

“Freddie?” Jim said again much softer this time. He placed his hands on the singer’s hips, the fabric silky under the touch, he realised that Freddie was in the grip of a panic attack.

“Freddie” Jim said calmly “You are going to be OK honey, can you breathe for me? Nothing else matters right now OK, just breathe.”
Jim exaggerated his own breathing so Freddie could hear the pace - in, out, in out. He took Freddie’s hand and placed it on his own chest, so Freddie could mimic his own breathing and heartbeat, grounding him to earth.

When Freddie blinked and looked up at him, Jim said “Good, good, well done. You are doing great. Now I want you to tell me what’s wrong.”

Freddie took a shaky breath, trying not to sob. “The piano….it’s not working right.”

“Ok. We can fix it. What is wrong with the piano. Does it need tuning?”

Freddie nodded, and a tear rolled down his cheek which Jim quickly wiped away.

“Alright, you are OK” he took both of Freddie’s hands in his, and looked him calmly in the eye.

“Now that I know what’s wrong, I can fix it. Are you going to be OK here while I sort this out for you?” Freddie nodded sniffing.

“Where is Roger?” Jim asked.

Freddie shrugged. “Ok” Jim pulled out a chair for Freddie. “You sit down here, and put on your nail polish. I will find Roger and send him back here so you are not alone OK? Then I will find someone to tune the piano.”

Jim ran from the room. Thankfully Roger was heading his way, so he was able to send him to Freddie immediately.

Freddie was much calmer when he saw Roger. Jim was glad he was, as he didn’t know how long he could conceal his own rising panic.

He didn’t know the first thing about tuning a piano!

Jim made his way out into the hall which was already starting to fill with people. He nearly felt as panicked as Freddie had moments ago – on the condition that he did find someone who could tune a piano, how long did it even take?! The band was due on stage in ten minutes.

Jim felt a little annoyed for Freddie and the band. People could be so dismissive and disrespectful because they were young musicians. They had specifically requested a piano, had been actively told to leave Freddie’s at home, so why hadn’t the organisers ensured it was ready to play.

These were all things Jim intended to find out, but first he had to find a piano tuner, and now.

Jim made his way into the sound booth, and was surprised to see Deaky in there talking with the technicians.

“Sorry to interrupt guys, we need a piano tuner right now.” said Jim.

Nobody seemed to grasp the urgency of his request, and shrugged their shoulders in his direction, taking a drag on their cigarettes.

He pulled Deaky to one side “Freddie’s having a fit mate, he can’t play the piano, it’s tuneless.”
Deaky went pale. “We need to find someone immediately.”

Both boys dashed back out into the hallway where people were milling about, talking, laughing and enjoying a pre-show drink. Deaky offered to go and find Brian, he always knew what to do.

Jim didn’t know what else he could do, other than frantically run from person to person, tapping them on the shoulder begging for anyone who knew how to tune a piano.

He felt he had aged ten years in the last ten minutes.

When he came up blank, he collapsed onto a bar stool, head in his hands.

The barman presented him with a shot of whiskey.

“You look like you need that mate” he said, pointing at Prenter at the end of the bar, to indicate who had bought him the drink. Prenter nodded, and Jim nodded his thanks. Maybe he wasn’t so bad after all. He certainly seemed to keep the drinks flowing.

Jim necked his drink quickly intending to resume his search for a piano tuner.

The bar seemed to empty in the next few minutes as people made their way into the concert hall.

Jim desperately wanted to go back to Freddie. To make sure he was OK, and calm, and ready for the show, but he felt there was no way he was fit to darken Freddie’s door until he got him an operational piano like he had promised.

Even if he never got his chance with Freddie – which was looking more and more likely – he at least wanted to be one of the few men that Freddie could trust.

He swung around to speak with the last group of stragglers in the distant hope that a piano tuner would be among them, and the whole world turned upside down.

Jim felt as though he would fall to his knees. The patterned wallpaper was moving in waves, the swirls of the brightly coloured carpet started to spin, and Jim thought he would be sick.

He staggered to the bathroom clutching at the wall, and knocking his knee painfully into a radiator.

He only just made it into the cubicle before falling to his knees and vomiting violently into the toilet.

When he thought he couldn’t possibly be sick anymore he sunk back, seeking the coolness of the tiles on his back. The room span and he blacked out.
Encounters: The Offer

Chapter Summary

Queen receive an offer to tour America as the supporting act to Mott the Hoople...but is the offer being made to the right person?

Chapter Notes

Lovies – I’m sorry for dangling you over another cliff edge 😊

Jim could hear thudding repeatedly as his head throbbed.
He cracked open his eyes, and attempted to clear his throat which was incredibly dry. He had pain in his stomach, but the majority of the spinning had stopped now.
The events of the evening came back to him in flashes; Freddie in a panic, Freddie needing a piano tuner, Jim promising him one, Jim letting him down.
He realised the thudding was actually rhythmical, he could hear drums, and a piano. Was that the band? Were they playing? The piano actually sounded great.
It took Jim five minutes to slowly pull himself up off the ground. He didn’t feel like himself at all.
He made his way out of the bathroom on shaky legs, as masses of people flooded out of the hall. It must be the interval.
Jim had lost forty five minutes of his life.

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He made his way backstage to where he knew the band would be frantically changing, and arguing over the show. The good parts, the bad parts, and those that were yet to come.
He hoped his actions – or inaction - had not been the cause of any bad parts.
He entered the dressing room, and felt a hand slap his arse as a streak of silky black satin dashed passed him.
Freddie.
He didn’t seem angry at all, in fact, he seemed quite elated, for what Jim could hear of him.
He couldn’t see him, as for some reason he had shut himself into the cupboard.
He was shouting through the door at an equally hyped up Roger, who was standing guard outside the cupboard door, passing strips of fabrics through when Freddie opened the door a crack.

Jim was amused. It was fine for Freddie to openly have sex in public, to wear outfits so tight they left nothing to the imagine, but he wouldn’t get changed in front of the men he lived with in a back stage dressing room.

Freddie just kept on opening up like a flower.

Brian came into the room looking amazing. His curls had been coiffured tightly into ringlets, and he was wearing what could only be described as a floating back winged women’s blouse.

Jim had to hand it to Freddie, the outfits were amazing, and oddly suited the boys without undermining their masculinity.

“Are you alright mate? You look a little peaky.” He asked Jim.

Jim was just about to tell Brian about having been so violently ill, when Freddie ran out of the cupboard practically flattening Roger with the door.

“I want to do Liar!” he shrieked. “Last song before the encore. Please….pleeeeeease” he begged when he saw the expressions on his band mates faces.

Deaky stepped forward holding out his hands in reason “You always get so angry when you sing that Fred! Brian starts strumming like a madman, then Roger tips his drums, and the audience erupts. We feed off your aggression. Besides, I hate my voice.”

Freddie stroked his hand lovingly down Deaky’s cheek “Your voice is pure honey darling. Don’t ever say that. You sound beautiful.” Deaky blushed, and he and the rest of the band knew that Freddie would get his way.

Freddie shrieked again and ran past Jim towards the door, as Paul Prenter came through it, practically knocking him flat. Prenter managed to side step Freddie at the last minute, and settled for having arms flung around his neck, and loud kisses on his cheek.

“The man of the hour!” shrieked Freddie. “The piano is a treat. Thank you so much darling. You literally saved my life!”

Over Freddie’s shoulder, Prenter smirked at Jim. “Don’t mention it Freddie. When you know the right people it’s nothing to get a piano swapped out at the last minute. It’s when you don’t that you look an idiot.”

It should have meant something. It should have registered, but Jim’s brain was muddled, and things were not yet making sense.

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As a closing number ‘Liar’ really was something else. The boys brought the house down. Not literally, as had concerned Deaky - Roger’s drum set remained intact this evening, and the audience were too enraptured to fight.
When Freddie had yelled “Listen!” in the middle of the song, had it not been for Roger’s light drumming you could have heard a pin drop in the audience.

Freddie literally held the audience’s attention all upon himself.

The aggression in the song was palpable, as Freddie threw himself from one side of the stage to the other: stamping, growling, and snarling. He seemed unstoppable.

Next came Deaky, who’s voice really was nice to listen to despite his own reservations, and perhaps even more impressive was his base solo.

Deaky had never been one to draw attention to himself, even if he was the only other person in a room. Tonight he played with such confidence, feet wide, slamming the base against his body with every note.

Jim had never been more impressed with a live band – especially considering they were young musicians, at the start of their career. Queen performed with such precision and maturity. Four individuals who worked incredibly hard for their applause.

The boys took their bow at the end of the encore, which was a number of fun cover versions done with a unique Queen - and Jim suspected Freddie - twist. They ran off the stage in absolute elation. The show had been a raging success.

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Prenter grabbed Freddie’s arm the minute he jumped down from the stage.

Freddie – thinking Paul was being affectionate - leaped into his arms in excitement. Paul endeavoured to get him back on his feet as quickly as possible.

All this hugging really was very unprofessional. Not to mention the impression it made on people to see two men embracing in public. He would have to speak to Freddie about these impromptu public displays of affection. Frankly they were childish.

“Come with me, I’ve got a reward for you” he whispered in Freddie’s ear. Lust swept across Freddie’s face, but Prenter stamped it out immediately.

“Not that kind of reward you slut, I’ve got blow.” Freddie looked a little confused and grabbed Roger who had become entangled in a group of fans on his way to the dressing room.

Prenter lead them into a cloak room beside the bar. He whipped a small bag of white powder out of his jacket pocket and a credit card from the other.

Paul quickly set the powder into little white lines.

“What do we do with this?” Freddie asked excitedly.

Having spent ten years locked away at a boarding school in India, followed by another two years in Zanzibar keeping his mother and sister safe from revolutionary fighters; Freddie had no real experience with drugs - other than the occasional spliff that Roger shared with him.

Paul’s expression was stunned “You’re taking the piss right?! First all of you can keep your voice
Paul passed the coke to Freddie, who promptly passed it to Roger.

“Hang on” said Freddie, a flash of caution “What will happen to me if I do this?” he turned to look at Roger who was cleaning the remnants of the white power from around his nose.

OK, he hadn’t grown an extra head, and seemed to be smiling.

“Listen, Freddie” growled Paul in annoyance. “I have arranged for some very important music industry people to be here tonight. You need to do exactly as I tell you, and we might hit the big time – alright?”

Freddie nodded excitedly resisting the urge to clap his hands together.

“Now stick that up your nose before I change my mind.” Freddie watched Paul snort the cocaine, and copied him immediately afterwards.

Jim had seen the bad and ugly when it came to drugs, both in London and at home in Ireland.

He should have been cross. He should have forced Freddie to tell him who had supplied him.

He should have hunted them down - but watching Freddie dancing wildly, and chattering excitedly to anyone who stood still long enough was frankly adorable.

Who could chastise a young rock star at play?! God knows he worked hard enough.

Jim watched him climb up onto the stage and attempt to tip an enormous speaker. Jim laughed out loud, the speaker was bigger than Freddie.

Brian wandered by, and Freddie called to him nodding at the speaker, “Help me Brimi” the sheer joy of mischief shining from his face.

Brian looked horrified, and carried on his way to Paul, who was gesturing him over to join him and his friends.

Paul called over to Jim, “Oy Hutton, round up your puppy, I need him front and center.” He did not look amused. Of course Paul’s irritability was further cause for Jim’s amusement.

Jim walked over to the stage, reached up to Freddie and threw him shrieking and kicking over his shoulder. He set him down giggling beside Paul.

Paul turned him towards a couple of very smartly dressed gentlemen.

“Let me introduce our lead vocalist and pianist, Freddie Mercury” said Paul.

“Freddie, this here is Sir Joseph Lockwood of EMI, and Norman Sheffield of Trident Studios.”

Freddie seemed to sober up in an instant. He tucked his unruly hair behind his ear, straightened to his full height with a slight blush creeping across his cheeks. He offered his hand, and politely said, “Very pleased to meet you Sir. Did you enjoy the show?”
Sheffield was amused. “Very much. You and your band have an energy, and a unique sound that will get you noticed. You are very talented.”

“With all due respect sir” Freddie’s voice only trembled a little, “Brian, Roger and John are not my band, I am one quarter of the band. We all four make up Queen.”

Jim could have hugged him. Standing there shy and star struck with his head held high correcting one of the highest influences in British rock music.

Well …when you are wrong, you are wrong.

Prenter looked a little peaky, then chuckled.

“As you can see, shiny with youthful energy. He’s got a great set of pipes on him too.”

“We hope to see great things for you Mr Mercury” said Lockwood.

He nodded at Paul “Can I see you for a moment?”

Paul looked around for a convenient space. “Step into my office” he said gesturing towards the cloakroom.

Brian started to follow them but Paul dismissed him with a wave.

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The door closed behind the men plunging them into quiet after the noise of the concert hall.

Sheffield got straight down to business. “Ok. I’m impressed with what I see, but I will need to hear more. We have a young but established band by the name of Mott the Hoople who are heading out on a US tour at the end of next month. Queen would fit the bill as their support band. If they are well received…IF….then we will consider them headlining their own tour of the UK next year. Mercury has a unique way with the crowd. Get their name out there and I don’t see a problem with filling the venues.”

“You won’t regret it sir. They are ripe. I know Freddie and the band have stars in their eyes and ants in their pants. We will need to talk remuneration of course.”

“Obviously. There’s one other thing.” Sheffield steepled his fingers over his nose. “What is your relationship to Mercury?”

“Relationship sir? I manage the band.”

“I heard there was some …extracurricular stuff going on …on the side.” Paul feigned confusion.

Sheffield cleared his throat “Are you in a sexual relationship with Mr Mercury?”

Paul laughed loudly “Where did you hear that?! Rumours and lies. Sheer jealousy.”

“That’s what I had hoped. We don’t support that kind of thing in our acts you understand.”

“Freddie – queer? Nah” Paul laughed. “He’s just a bit over exuberant sir. Fashion conscious that sort
of thing. In fact, he has a string of girls locally. Can take his pick.”

“Good. Good. Now that’s what we like. A man not committed. Not saddled with a wife and children either. And the others? The band?”

“University students sir. You’ve nothing to worry about there. The only thing the lads are committed to is their music.”

The three men discussed at length the deal that was being offered. Paul pushed back on each of their offers, forcing a little more favourable terms for Queen.

Once a provisional agreement had been made, they all shook hands. The band would be beside themselves with excitement.

Paul was rather pleased with himself too.

As they were leaving the room, Sheffield grabbed Paul’s arm “Now, you understand that if we were to take the band to America under our label, then we would be managing them lock, stock and barrel? There wouldn’t be a position in there for you?”

That changed everything…..
The boys have a free day in Liverpool, and when Jim wakes up everyone has already left for the day - except for Freddie.
Could it really be true that he has Freddie to himself for the day….

Lovies – This chapter is a little different. Although the plot does move along, it’s a slow paced look at the deep bond forming between Freddie and Jim. Is Freddie actually blind?? I’ll let you decide....

Thank you so much for your continued support.

Paul Prenter could not believe that on the first night of their tour, the Queen boys wanted to get an early night.

He was especially pissed off with Brian, who seemed to think he still managed the band, and had got in Freddie’s ear about conserving his energy, and being fit for tomorrow. Freddie didn’t seem to be doing too much of that right now, shrieking with laughter because he won the most points at scrabble. For fucks sake! His voice would be in shreds.

Prenter also hadn’t given him the blow to sleep off. He wanted Freddie to be seen. The perpetual party animal who couldn’t get enough. Insatiable appetites for sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

It didn’t do Prenter any harm either - having Freddie on his arm.

He was a pain in the arse in moments like these though. He looked about twelve. All traces of makeup gone, his hair in fluffy curls, wrapped in a brightly coloured blanket.

Paul would have to do something about Freddie's image, or he would be a laughing stock on the cover of New Musical Express.

“Collateralised” screamed Freddie jumping up onto the bench.

Paul looked across at Jim who was smiling softly at Freddie’s excitement. He was a parasite as well. Lying on the sofa pretending to be reading a magazine, while all the time checking out Freddie from afar.

He wished he would piss off. He wished he had hit him with something harder.

Gardener’s World magazine! They were an odd mix of juveniles and geriatrics.

Liverpool would be better, it couldn’t be more boring. He knew people in Liverpool. He could get better quality stash. He could also think of one of two other ways he could make money, Freddie’s
infamous sex drive was key.

“Shall I tell our driver to set off for Liverpool tonight? Paul asked “We are all on board.”

The band agreed.

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The following morning Jim stepped outside for a cigarette.

He really liked the city. It didn’t have the best reputation, but it was a great place to start for those immigrating from Ireland - like he once had, and unfortunately people like Jim Connors.

Liverpool was full of energy and transience. It was where The Beatles had hailed from.

Jim had offered his services as a tour guide the previous night, but Prenter had made it clear that the band had no use for Jim generally. Jim laughed to himself. He was a self-important moron.

Jim stubbed out his cigarette and turned to get back on the bus. It was a bit misty today, and there was a chill in the air.

There was a note left by the kettle, and each of the boys had written their names on it, and where they had gone. Notably, Prenter’s said ‘to see a man about a dog.’ Jim rolled his eyes. He was such an idiot!

Roger’s name was the last on the list, with a note underneath saying ‘Jim, don’t leave Freddie on his own – Freddie doesn’t like to be alone.’

Jim smiled and felt warm inside. Could that man be any more adorable?!

Freddie had not yet written his own name on the note, so Jim figured he must still be in his bunk. He flicked the kettle on and set about making tea for himself and Freddie.

He flicked through the tiny cupboard, there was nothing save for an empty biscuit wrapper, there was definitely nothing nice to give Freddie with his tea. He turned back to the note, and reliably beside Brian’s name it said ‘gone to the shops.’

Jim carried two mugs of tea through the bus to the curtain drawn around where Freddie and Roger slept.

He knocked softly on the nearest counter top before drawing back the curtain.

Freddie was still fast asleep. Jim intended to put down the tea, and leave him to it - he really had.

Freddie was so peaceful. Curled up small, both arms tightly hugging his pillow. He was dead to the world. Not even a hint of a dream going on in that pretty head.

Jim carefully popped the mugs down beside Freddie’s bed. He should have left, but he found himself crouched down beside him.

He carefully brushed a lock of hair away that must have been tickling his nose, and popped the lightest kiss on his cheek bone. Jim started to think about the delicious ways he would like to wake Freddie - that was definitely his cue, his push to leave - but Freddie was stirring.
Feeling like he’d been caught with his hand in the cookie jar, Jim turned to leave quickly, but a soft voice said “Come in darling.”

Jim turned to Freddie who was rubbing his eyes with the heels of his hands. He must have been in a very deep sleep.

Freddie sat up, and shuffled along the bed, patting it to indicate that Jim should sit beside him.

Jim picked up the mugs and crawled into the space, handing Freddie a steaming mug.

“Ooh lovely” said Freddie “I like being woken up like this.” Not quite what Jim had in mind, but it felt good to please him.

Freddie rested his head on Jim’s shoulder. He seemed very soft this morning. Starring into space as though not yet fully free of sleep’s grip. Nothing like the rock star of last night. He was always an affectionate little thing, always had time for a hug, but he seemed carefree this morning. No one would have believed that this was a man who would be performing in front of 1,500 people this evening.

Jim thought back to the piano fiasco yesterday, and hoped that Freddie wouldn’t have reason to be so upset before this evening’s performance.

That was one stroke he could put in Prenter’s favour - the events were well organised (piano notwithstanding), and the after parties would be more so.

Freddie didn’t have to think of a thing.

“What would you like to do today?” asked Freddie sleepily.

Jim was mentally listing the sexual acts he would like to perform on Freddie, but he was fairly sure that’s not what he meant.

“Whatever you want sweetheart” said Jim diplomatically “I’m here to help you perform remember.”

Freddie shook his head “No, don’t do that darling. We don’t have to think about the show for a few hours yet, you should enjoy your day.”

Jim would remember that when Freddie was famous - the rock star who cared about the roadie’s day.

Freddie gasped sitting up with excitement like he’d just been given a shot “Take me to The Tate please, please, please?”

Now who could say no to that?!

It had taken Freddie an inordinate amount of time to get himself ready to go out, but once he had there was no kerbing his enthusiasm.

Jim was pleased that Freddie now chatted easily to him. The shyness was still there a little bit – especially when he wanted some help, or a favour doing - but perhaps that was just Freddie. It was very endearing. There was no sign of the challenge that once existed, or even the suspicion that Jim
was trying to take advantage.

Their relationship would never be like Freddie and Rogers - but then Jim surmised that Roger didn’t want to take Freddie in every room of the house!

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The Tate was an imposing building on the waterfront, and Jim felt it’s grandeur.

He had never been to an art gallery before, but he did not mention this to Freddie. He didn’t want to make himself seem small, or suburban.

Jim was from a family of carpenters. They were craftsmen for sure, but also considered tradesmen, their work would never be exhibited in a place like this.

Freddie - it would seem - was cultured. Just another surprise in this beautifully wrapped enigma of a man.

Jim thought if he was to love Freddie for the rest of his days, he would be surprised by something on each and every one of those days.

Freddie promised he wasn’t going to go to every floor, as he stretched up to hug Jim for accompanying him, but there was one specific painting that he was very eager to see.

When he located it, he spent half an hour just staring at it, moving from side to side, admiring it from different angles.

The painting was in bold colours. It depicted a house surrounded by trees. All of which appeared to be twisted and warped as though by a storm. It didn’t mean anything to Jim, but Freddie was enraptured.

When he eventually spoke, Freddie likened the painting to the adaptations he would have to make as man and a performer. To strengthen, to mould, to adjust, to season - but never to break.

Jim was mesmerised by a different piece of artwork – one that he didn’t understand any better – Freddie himself.

Jim took in every small detail of his face as he admired the painting. Jim could almost see the questions about the painting running through his mind.

As Freddie slowly moved around the painting, Jim admired the way he moved. He moved like a panther. Slowly, and sleekly.

Jim took in the curve of his hips, the muscle of his buttocks and thighs, and struggled not to touch.

In fact - not touching became a problem almost out of Jim’s control.

Freddie was like a magnet.

It was natural as they bumped along side by side that Jim would take his hand, natural that he would extend an arm around Freddie’s waist to usher him through the revolving doors, and on to the escalator, natural that he would pay for Freddie to enter the museum.
Was it a touch too far that he wrapped his arms tightly around his waist and pulled him back against his body while he pondered a display? The middle aged people around them certainly thought it was highly unnatural, and Jim was concerned they would be asked to leave.

Was this two people on a date?

Freddie seemed to think this was friendship, acceptable proximity for two men – one of whom was attached.

Jim wondered what Paul would think.

Jim wondered how he would feel if he and Freddie were together, and Freddie behaved like this with other men. He felt an even stronger urge to pull Freddie towards him possessively. That would be a deal breaker if Freddie was his.

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They made their way from the Gallery to the Merseyside. It was cold, and the mist wasn’t clearing.

Freddie shivered.

Jim wrapped his arm around him. Quickly realising what he had done again, he pulled away, and addressed the problem.

“Sorry! I am sorry, I shouldn’t do that to you when you have Paul. Really Freddie if I make you feel uncomfortable please just push me away.” Jim said quickly before he could regret it.

Freddie shook his head “No, I like cuddling” he said softly. Wrinkling up his nose he continued “Paul doesn’t do cuddling.”

Jim stopped walking in faux horror, clutching at his chest “Doesn’t do cuddling! He’s not right in the head that chap.” They laughed loudly.

Ignoring everyone around them, Jim pulled Freddie into his chest in a warm hug, and kissed the top of his head. Freddie wrapped his arms around Jim’s waist, and made no move to pull away.

After a few of minutes, and a few odd looks from passers-by, Jim looked down at Freddie’s face. He appeared deep in thought – even downcast.

Jim placed two fingers under Freddie’s chin, and brought his head up to look at him.

“Freddie, are you happy?” he asked. Jim knew he was out of line. He didn’t have the right to impose upon Freddie’s personal feelings.

Freddie’s face lit up in a beaming showman smile. “I’m very happy darling. I have everything.”

It might have worked on somebody that didn’t know Freddie, somebody that didn’t love him, but for Jim the smile didn’t quite meet his eyes.

Feeling a little sadistic, Jim felt a flare of warmth in his chest - he was down, but maybe he wasn’t completely out of the running for Freddie’s affections.
Jim spotted a kiosk a little ahead selling hot drinks and donuts.

“Come on” he pointed to the kiosk “Let’s get you warmed up.”

They took their coffees to the riverside. Looking out over the water.

Freddie started to sing softly – Ferry Cross the Mersey. His voice was crystal clear, no sign of weariness from last night.

He also seemed to be singing for the joy of it. There was no audience here. He wasn’t singing loud enough to be heard by passers-by. It was just Freddie, in his most natural state, singing.

When he started to dance he slipped cleverly and seamlessly into attention seeking Freddie. Jim couldn’t help but smile affectionately, even though he was a bit pink in the cheeks from the attention that was coming his way by association.

After they had finished their coffee, Jim had suggested they make their way back to the bus. He didn’t want the band to be looking for Freddie, he was also concerned that the damp air might damage his voice before tonight.

Freddie had no such concerns, and had become quite animated.

“Bet I can leap frog over that” said Freddie eyes dancing playfully. That was a stone sculpture at least a little over half of Freddie’s height.

Jim covered his face with his hand, he knew that whether he said yes you can, or no you can’t - Freddie would try it anyway.

“You know, if you hurt yourself before the show they’ll blame me don’t you? Also, I’m never buying you coffee again, we’re sticking to tea from now on” he laughed good humouredly.

As they wandered back to the bus, they passed some food stalls.

“Shall I get us something nice to eat to take back to the bus?” asked Jim.

Freddie eyed the stalls curiously “Can you eat things from stalls?” he asked wrinkling his nose. “Won’t there be worms and maggots and things in it” he wriggled his finger as though imitating a worm.

Jim doubled over roaring with laughter, clutching his sides. “Oh Freddie, where have you been?” he said with humour. “Of course you can eat it silly” Freddie pouted. He didn’t like to be laughed at.

Jim also didn’t know that Freddie had spent most of his life up until now being catered for by chefs and servants.

Jim bought a variety of things for them to eat. Once Freddie had a good look at the food he suddenly wanted to try everything.
Once back in the warmth of the bus, Freddie and Jim were the picture of serenity reading a magazine – or rather Jim was reading a magazine.

Freddie laid on the bench with his head in Jim’s lap, his eyes closed.

There was food all over the table where Freddie had opened everything, and had eaten the tiniest bit, much to Jim’s amusement. Jim had no idea where Freddie’s energy reserves came from for the show on such small amounts of food.

Freddie wasn’t sleeping, he was enjoying the peace, and absorbing Jim’s affection.

When Jim thought he had finally nodded off, he stopped stroking Freddie’s hair. Within seconds Freddie was whining at him until he started again. Jim smiled.

This was a good day. This was a very good day.

All too soon the door crashed open and the others arrived back, bringing noise and fun with them.

Brian struggled up the steps with beer and snacks for six for this evening.

Deaky had brought his base guitar back to practice before tonight’s show – there was a bit he couldn’t quite get right.

Roger looked great in his new togs, and he’d had a haircut.

Then there was Paul – who it seemed had only returned to make Freddie feel lazy and ill prepared. He started on him the minute he walked in.

Freddie had jumped up to ask about his day, all smiles and hugs.

“You’re not ready!” Paul snapped.

“I was born ready darling” teased Freddie biting his lip. “When you look this good it doesn’t take much time to prepare.”

Freddie’s teasing didn’t have the desired effect of softening Paul’s mood. If anything, it wound Paul up tighter.

“In an hour you will be meeting with tonight’s promoter. You are not dressed for the occasion, your costumes are not ready. Do you even have a set list?”

Brian pulled the set list out of his guitar case, and handed it to Paul. He might as well not have bothered, as it seemed Paul’s only reason for the question was to belittle Freddie.

“Why do I bother?! I have spent the whole day at The Empire getting the place ready, promoting the
band, making sure the most important people will be there, so you will be seen.”

“Darling, if you would have said where you were going I would have joined you…” Freddie started, but Paul spoke over him.

“Do you even want the band to succeed because right now it looks like I’m the only one trying.”

He had cracked. If Freddie swelled to ten feet taller when he got on stage, he now resembled a Borrower.

His head was bowed, he chewed on his nails, he couldn’t meet Paul’s eyes, he couldn’t think of a single thing to say.

That man was supposed to love him.

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Paul was greeted warmly at the door by the evening’s promoter, Roy Jenkins. Paul and Roy went back years. Both from Belfast, both with their fingers in a number of pies.

Although Freddie understood that show business was just that – business – he hung a little behind Jim when they arrived.

He was shy around people he didn’t know, and liked to have his friends close to give him the confidence he needed to deal with managers, promoters and the media – the feared PR machine.

Brian was fully prepared. He was the band’s spokesperson, it had been agreed many years ago that Brian was the most eloquent. He was used to presenting his science projects to large groups.

Paul seemed to miss that though, and he kept trying to drag Freddie to the front.

Jim didn’t like the way that Jenkins – a small rodent faced man - was looked at Freddie. Eyes mentally undressing him, a bit too obviously lingering on his arse.

Jim could see that Freddie was working very hard not to hide, and to be open and friendly, his efforts were wasted on Jenkins.

As the band were shown backstage to their dressing room. Roy caught Paul’s arm.

“Your singer, is he like us?”


“They all look queer! Sweet piece of ass. You had him?”

“Yep. Little slut. Goes all night. He’s mine though, it’ll cost you.”

“What are we talking?”

Paul tapped his nose, “Leave it with me”.

Encounters: Exposed

Chapter Summary

As Queen soar in popularity, Freddie is struggling to cope with public relations. Luckily there is lots to distract him – but maybe he should stay a little more alert to those around him….

Chapter Notes

Lovies – I ask you, who could kick Freddie Mercury out of bed???

Freddie could hear his own heart beat vibrating in his ears. He could feel the blood rush. His tongue felt too big in his mouth, he couldn’t swallow passed the enormous lump in his throat. He quickly placed a hand over his mouth when he thought he might to vomit.

The fabric of Brian’s stage costume shimmered in front of him like an ocean wave. It was making him feel seasick.

Swallowing down hard, he closed his eyes for a moment trying to regain composure.

He reached out a hand and tucked it into the back of Brian’s belt loop. It felt good to touch someone. It grounded him. Like Jim had taught him yesterday.

Brian turned when he felt Freddie touch him. “Are you OK?” he whispered. Freddie nodded his head quickly and forced a smile.

He liked the feel of his hair blocking out people’s view of his face. Like a horse uses blinkers, it made him feel a little less like bolting.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I would like to introduce the members of Queen.”

Their names were called out one by one as they filed out in front of the press panel.

Freddie thought he might faint.

They sat down on a long sofa. It was hardly big enough for four men, but Freddie felt a little safer tucked between Brian and Roger’s thighs.

He clutched onto the stem of the wine glass he had refused to give up before going on. It gave him something to do with his hands, it was something to swallow, and hopefully it would ease his nerves a little as the interview progressed.

Freddie dared to raise his eyes for a second. He was temporarily blinded by rapid flashing of cameras, and a number of men were pointing microphones at him like weapons.

He couldn’t do this, he absolutely couldn’t do this.
It was different being Freddie Mercury the performer. He could insist on performing after dark, he could insist on spot lights so bright that he couldn’t see any of his audience.

He could twirl and leap and seductively sway his hips, belting out notes like he was in his bedroom singing into a hairbrush, with Roger beating out a tune on his upturned cereal bowl with a spoon.

This was different.

Here they expected him to talk back. It would be recorded, and it would be in print for the whole of Liverpool to read.

He heard a voice ask “How long are we scheduled?” “Fifteen minutes” came the answer.

“I can’t bear 15 seconds” said Freddie, not realising he had spoken out loud.

Much to his relief he must have sounded funny because everyone laughed.

“So….Queen?” began the journalist. “May I congratulate you on a fantastic opening night here at The Empire. It’s the first time you have performed in Liverpool, and you brought the house down.”

There was a round of applause.

Freddie heard his mates mumble their thanks.

“Unusual name, who’s idea was that?”

All the microphones pointed at Freddie.

He couldn’t raise his head.

If he opened his mouth he would be sick.

He elbowed Brian as hard as he could with no space to get a good swing.

“It was Freddie’s actually” Brian’s voice rang out calm and true. “We had a number of options, but Freddie usually gets his way in these matters” everyone laughed.

“Yes, we hear he can be a diva” the journalist laughed “What do you make of that Freddie?”

The microphone was shoved further towards him.

Freddie raised his head and smiled theatrically “True… all true darling.”

It was a mistake.

Every journalist took that as a sign that they could approach him, and the next five questions were all directed at Freddie.

He also noticed their questions were rather more personal than about the music.

“So Freddie, with those dark swarthy looks, you appear rather more eastern than white British?”

Was that a question thought Freddie.

“I… I’m from Felt…Kensington” he stammered nearly giving away his parents address.

“The song lyrics are very Tolkien, do you use your music to escape your life?”
He couldn’t do it anymore, everything ached with the tension. He dropped his head allowing his hair to cover his face. He twirled his fingers around the ends of his hair tugging sharply. The pain in his scalp relieved his anxiety for seconds at time.

He wished he was one of Brian’s beloved hedgehogs at that moment, so he curl up completely and block everyone out.

Roger sensed his friend’s distress, and picked up the question with an angelic smile.

Freddie exhaled loudly as he left the room and headed for the bar. He wasn’t really sure where he was going, but he needed a cigarette.

That had been terrifying.

As he approached the bar he noticed two men waiting for him – Jim and Paul.

At that moment Freddie felt he would have preferred to leap into Jim’s arms.

Freddie recognised the expression on his face from after he had got into a fight the other night. Full of compassion, his eyes asking “are you OK?” He could still feel the warm hug Jim had given him that night, and he felt he needed that now.

He looked at Paul, who appeared angry, he couldn’t stand it when anyone was angry with him.

He wondered what he could do to relieve that anger.

He stood on his tip toes and pressed light kisses under Paul’s ear. Freddie knew he loved that.

He squeezed Paul’s hand, flirtatiously gazing up at him through his eyelashes, and said “Would you like to come with me?”

Paul shook him off.

“What the fuck was that? You sounded like a blithering idiot!” he snapped.

Freddie could feel tears prickling his eyes.

He wouldn’t cry. He would not cry. He was a man.

He felt a large warm hand on his back “Easy Paul, that was his first go” he heard Jim’s voice soothing.

“No excuse to sound thick as fuck!”

“Do you know this man at all?!” Jim’s voice was rising “He’s very shy. Yes, he didn’t say much, but what he did say was intelligent and eloquent. Besides Brian and Roger made up for it. Deaky didn’t speak at all and no one is bullying him. There were four men up there, and they picked on Freddie. We just need to get him a little coaching. He’ll know what to expect next time.”

Paul turned to Jim narrowing his eyes and standing up tall.
“I am trying to raise the profile of this band. The lead singer – the front man - needs to do better than that. Next it will be the national press, not just local, now off you fuck.”

Jim raised a salute in sarcasm. He dared to give Freddie a quick squeeze before marching out of the bar.

Paul turned to Freddie “I’ve arranged for us to have dinner in the restaurant tonight. There will be twelve at the table including the band and Jim. The others are music industry people, so Freddie make a good impression.” He lightly tapped Freddie’s arse. “…and keep the costume on, it’s sexy.”

Paul winked.

Freddie laughed finally feeling some relief from the earlier tension.

“Sexy I can do…but I would like to get changed. I’m all sweaty and ick” he said wrinkling his nose.

“OK,” said Paul “….but I want to see a sexy little number. You can use your charm tonight.”

Freddie relaxed “That I can do darling.”

Jim was already seated in the dining room with Brian, Roger and Deaky when Freddie swept in.

Jim whistled softly under his breath, thankfully only catching Brian’s attention.

Freddie was wearing skin tight black jeans with an enormous belt. A black t-shirt with a low V showing rather more chest hair than was classy in a restaurant, but the candy stripped jacket worn over it gave it just the right amount of polish.

This evening Freddie looked very handsome.

Jim noticed that Freddie was still wearing his trusty platform shoes.

He smiled to himself thinking about how Freddie liked to give himself a little more height when in public.

God knows what he would do when they were no longer in fashion.

Knowing Freddie he would probably create the next fashion.

Jim allowed himself a quick thought of the last time he had been at home with Freddie. When he had worn just the kimono and was barefoot. He barely reached Jim’s shoulder at full height.

Yes, the man wore clothes to his greatest advantage – be that height, or sex appeal.

Freddie approached the table, wrapped his arm around Roger’s throat and gave his a faux squeeze.

“You alright Blondie?” He was back to his cheeky self, and Jim surmised it might have been due to a little Dutch courage, given how the pupils of his beautiful brown eyes were blown wide.

Jim wanted to drag him across his knee and do wicked things to him.

Just then Paul arrived with a number of men who looked more like home video game players than
music connoisseurs.

Apart from Paul himself, the band were much better dressed.

Paul grabbed Freddie’s elbow as he went to sit down next to Roger.

He said “No, you’re with us.”

Freddie pouted. He’d had a very difficult afternoon being faced with journalists he didn’t know, he would have preferred to meet Paul’s friends from the safe distance of his own pack.

Freddie found himself seated between Roy Jenkins – the evening’s promoter - and a man named Ryan Shaw.

He at least wanted to sit beside Paul, but Paul placed a bottle of Moet et Chandon in front of him, said “be friendly”, and disappeared.

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Although totally appreciative of everything Paul had done for him and the band in organising the tour, Freddie really wanted to be in Heaven right now.

He wanted to have men plying him with drink, knowing they would get it all returned in sex later.

He may not know those men either, but he knew how to please them.

Roger would also be with him, as his wing man.

Right now he was expected to be a conversationalist, to be smart and sassy. To know about popular music and film, and current affairs.

He smiled to himself, he would love to do something really mischievous right now to these pompous men.

He had once hidden Brian’s hairbrush before a show, and it had been raining. Brian’s hair had taken on a similar style to Diana Ross.

Freddie giggled at the memory, and quickly restrained it with a hand over his mouth.

Ryan leaned over and pushed his hand away. He placed a lit cigarette between Freddie’s lips, then lowered himself enough to look into Freddie’s eyes.

“What’s funny?” he asked.

Freddie shyly shook his head covering his face with his hair, but that didn’t stop the giggles coming.

Ryan drew his chair up closer and placed a hand on Freddie’s knee under the table.

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Paul re-entered the dining room and headed for the bar.
Dinner would be served shortly.

He cast a glance over at Freddie who he could see was talking animatedly with Ryan, his hands waving in the air in the way he always used to dramatize a story.

He was glad they were getting along. It made greasing the wheels that little bit easier, as did the blow.

He had to get Freddie over this silly shyness.

His sex drive was incredible, he would be worth a fortune.

It seemed people paid well for an encounter with a rock star.

He pulled his fat wallet out of his pocket and glanced down at the notes. Oh yes, even straight men would pay top dollar for a blow job from a rock star.

They would eat, Paul would drop Freddie a little top up, then he would earn his keep.

Paul liked Liverpool.

Jim leaned back in his chair and patted his stomach. He couldn’t ever remember eating like that.

As much as he fiercely disliked Paul Prenter as a man, he had to congratulate him on his hospitality, and great network.

Queen had received more publicity this weekend than they had ever seen.

Tonight’s concert had been absolutely seamless, which made the work of himself and the roadies so much easier too.

All in all, Jim would count this as one of the best days of his life. He had been the first person Freddie had seen when he opened his eyes, he had been to The Tate, he had seen snippets of a fantastic show, and now gourmet food.

Life was good.

There was just one thing missing from it….

He had been watching Freddie all evening from across the table.

While it caused him great physical pain, Jim couldn’t help but be enchanted by how Freddie pulled men into his orbit. Each and every one of Paul’s friends were around him, hanging on his every word, every story, and Freddie could be heard giggling between the punch lines.

Jim also had to laugh at how little Freddie ate – not enough to keep a sparrow in flight.

He replaced food with champagne, which his body really couldn’t handle, and Jim suspected drugs were in the mix too …maybe a little coke.

Jim had to admit that in spite of the situation, and in spite of himself, he was absolutely and categorically beyond all help.
He unconditionally loved everything about this man.

My God he was in trouble!

The boys were also having a fabulous evening.

They had lost Roger some time ago, as he flirted his way from table to table, meeting other guests.

Jim knew that Paul would be thrilled with Roger’s attempt to get the band known more generally.

Deaky was being the most conversationalist that Jim had ever seen him, and Brian … well Brian always had lots of interesting deep topics of conversation.

Freddie caught Jim’s eye as he got up from the table, with a cheeky wink he disappeared from the room.

A couple of minutes later Ryan followed. Subtle boys… not!

Jim felt his heart splinter. It was time for him to leave.

If this day was to count as one of the best days of his life, he would need to edit this part from it.

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Jim’s eyes sprung open as he heard a crash and felt a strong breeze rush through the bus.

Judging by the whispering voices and giggles – which were not discreet – Jim knew Paul and Freddie were back, and they did not sound sober.

Jim had strongly suggested to Brian that he would happily share with Roger, so Freddie could have his bunk which was next to Paul.

Let the happy couple have their wicked way with each other far away from Jim. Brian did not like that idea at all. He wanted the band together - if he was going to get Freddie’s attention even for short periods of time.

Brian was also beginning to distrust Paul. He didn’t like his manner – especially around Freddie – but it was the people that surrounded Paul that Brian disliked the most.

Jim did not blame him one bit.

The couple fell into Paul’s bed, groaning and whining about not having enough space in the single bunks.

He heard Freddie sigh loudly, and thought oh God please don’t, not inches from me, that’s just cruel.

It soon became apparent that Paul had other plans.

“Freddie, get off me” He spat in a violent whisper.

“Just hold me. We’ll take up less space.” Freddie was almost pleading.

“Fuck off. Get in your own bunk” snapped Paul.
“Some boyfriend you are!” Freddie snapped back.

A couple of quiet moments passed before Freddie came hurtling out of bed, crashing onto the floor.

“Get off me!” shrieked Paul, not even trying to be quiet anymore.

Freddie curled up small on the floor. A moment passed. “Night then” he said in a small voice.

That was Freddie. Wanting so much to be near to Paul that he would sleep on the floor beside him.

And that was Paul…letting him.

Jim lasted a whole 30 seconds before climbing out of his own bunk.

He leant down to Freddie, swooping him up in his arms, nearly stumbling onto Paul when the stiffness in his back from the uncomfortable bed gripped him.

Paul didn’t stir, it seemed he had fallen into a drunken sleep with no regard for Freddie’s welfare what so ever.

“Come on darling” whispered Jim. He settled Freddie down into his own bunk.

“Hold me” his words were barely a whisper.

Jim tucked the thin sheet as tightly around Freddie’s tired, alcohol soaked body as he could.

“I can’t darling, your boyfriend is right there.”

It broke him to say it.

To deny Freddie the most simple of human needs, when he would have given him anything.

He kissed Freddie tenderly on his temple, and made his way through the bus to Freddie’s bunk, trying not to stumble in the dark.

When he sat on the bed, he noticed Freddie’s blanket rolled neatly beside him.

Jim silently made his way back through the bus to Freddie’s sleeping form. He wrapped his blanket tightly around him and kissed his cheek “Night, night honey.”

Taken completely by surprise, Jim felt a hand at the back of his neck, and was pulled down into a slow deep kiss.

Freddie tasted of alcohol and cigarettes, but there was something else. Something warm, and soft, and full of sweetness that was quintessentially Freddie.

“Night Paul” whispered Freddie.

Jim climbed silently into Freddie’s bunk.

Light would come before Jim found sleep.
Encounters: Confronted

Chapter Summary

Jim overhears a conversation between Paul and Freddie, and loses his cool. Unfortunately Roger is in the way. Can the boys resolve their problems? Or has Jim had enough?

Chapter Notes

Lovies – who wants to punch Paul Prenter?

“Hey, Jim, where’s Freddie?”

Jim could barely make sense of the question after his rough night.

Why was a shirtless Roger shaking him awake all sleep mused and wild hair.

Why was Roger in his bedroom at all?

Then he remembered he was on the Queen tour bus. He remembered the night before, the show, putting Freddie to bed, the kiss.

He ghosted a hand over his lips as though he expected to find Freddie still there.

“He’s with Paul…my bunk.”

“Thanks.”

Roger turned to go, then popped his head back around the curtain. “Couldn’t get us some breakfast could you mate, I’m starving?” Roger winked.

Waiting on the band hand and foot wasn’t exactly Jim’s role on the tour, but he liked to make himself useful.

“Yes. I need some cigarettes anyway, and I know you’ll want a band meeting this morning. Give me ten minutes and I’ll be out of your hair.”

Jim made his way into the living area after as good a wash as he could get on a tour bus.

Brian, Deaky and Paul were already sitting around the table having their first coffee.

All were still in their sleepwear, with the exception of Paul who was suited and booted, and ready to face the day.
Paul was pointing out where the previous night’s show could have gone better. The lads weren’t even dressed yet.

Like he was an authority on rock and roll thought Jim.

“Do you blokes want to put your breakfast orders in, I’m popping to the shop?” asked Jim.

“Oooh you superstar” said Brian “You couldn’t get us some tea could you? Fred’s all out, and Fred without tea is painful. Earl grey if you can get it. Oh, and some fruit thanks.”

“Fruit?” snapped Roger coming through the door still looking like he’d just rolled out of bed. “Bacon mate, lots of it, oooh and cinnamon rolls.”

“Mmmmm” Deaky nodded in agreement.

“What does Freddie like in a morning?” Jim asked.

Paul sniggered and looked up at Jim slyly. “Wouldn’t you love to know mate?!”

Jim blushed to the roots of his hair.

“Fred’s in a shit mood. What have you done to him?” Roger snapped at Paul. “What happened last night anyway, I was looking for him?”

Roger was quickly going off Paul, especially looking so smug at this time of the day.

Paul tutted and rolled his eyes. “Why do you assume I have done anything to him? There were plenty of men wanting a piece of ass after last night’s show!”

“Oy” said Brian waving his teaspoon at Paul “Shut up!”

Calmly he turned to Jim “Freddie likes them little pastry things with the chocolate in. Sounds like he needs sweetening up this morning.”

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Jim enjoyed his walk. It wasn’t especially warm, but it was bright, and for half an hour he wasn’t on the bus.

It also gave him time to think about the kiss.

Despite weeks of orchestrating and planning, the kiss had come out of the blue.

Jim would have preferred to have kissed Freddie for the first time when he was sober - and awake would be nice – but it wasn’t either of those things that really troubled him.

If Freddie was so tired and so drunk that he thought Jim was Paul, then Jim could never raise the subject – ever – he couldn’t risk Paul finding out that Freddie had kissed another man.

Or perhaps on some level Freddie had known he had kissed Jim, and accidentally called him the wrong name.
hey had spent the day together. Jim had given Freddie more hugs than was probably appropriate for a taken man. Would it be unexpected if he was on Freddie’s mind?

More disturbing than all of those things though was how affection deprived Freddie had seemed. He was surrounded by people all day long - all night long. He was never alone.

He had commanded his first audience of over fifteen hundred people, all of whom were adulating and worshiping at his tiny platform shoes, but just before he went to sleep, before the day ended, he needed to kiss someone – or anyone.

Jim had no idea if he had been the intended recipient of that kiss - in which case he would definitely push for a repeat - or his unworthy boyfriend.

Jim heard raised voices as he approached the back of the bus.

He didn’t mean to listen, but he could hardly avoid it either.

His first thought was that the band discussion must have got a little heated, and gone on for longer. That seemed to happen more often now that Paul was managing the band.

However it was Freddie’s voice he heard first. He did not sound happy.

“I don’t like him Paul! He’s not even my type. Why are you so determined that I should fuck him? You fuck him if he’s that hot.”

“Aah come on. Don’t give me that. The great Freddie Mercury piking on a shag. Thought you had more in you. He’s coming back tonight, and it’s you he wants.”

“I’m not doing him again.” Freddie was adamant. “He hurt me, I’m still sore this morning…and not in a good way. I know I’m hot darling, but I’m not a fuck toy for your buddies. I can barely stand this morning, and my throat is hoarse from sucking cock!”

Paul sniggered “I never thought I’d hear you complain Mercury. Roy’s offered to fund your little drug habit, so you better pay up. Don’t forget you owe me for that blow you gave Blondie. Hey, maybe he’ll turn tricks, he’s an eager little thing. Not nearly as hot as you though.”

“Roger’s not gay you fucking moron!” shrieked Freddie. “You keep your fucking hands off Roger. And stop offering me up to your mates for favours. I don’t even want the coke if it’s this much trouble. I’m not your musical prostitute!” Freddie was acerbic.

“Oh, but you are sweetness. You’re worth a fortune. Hot little ass, and you sing quite well too. Be ready tonight after the show.”

“You are supposed to be the professional manager of this band.” Freddie was using his most proper voice. “You want money for the coke, get us more gigs, you’ll get your money.”

Freddie’s voice softened “I love that you aren’t jealous darling, but when are we going to get some action? Just you and me?”

“That’s the spirit! You’ll be up for it again tonight, you’ll see. I’ll get you another fix, maybe some
poppers, anything you need to get you in the zone. You’ll be ready to go…. all night long” Paul attempted to sing Liar.

“Fuck off Paul. You’re not my pimp.”

********************

Poppers! It all came flooding back to Jim. Manchester. The piano. The drink. The hard bathroom floor.

Jim felt the blood rush down to his feet.

Roger popped his head out of the bus and had just lit a cigarette, when he noticed Jim.

“Jim what you doing mate?”

Jim felt fury rush through his veins. “Rog, fucking Prenter needs to be stopped right now! He’s lining up blokes to screw Freddie after the gigs for drug money.”

Roger started to laugh “Shut up mate! You’ve got that wrong.”

“I’m talking about questionable consent here Roger!” Jim was shaking with rage.

Roger blew out a smoke ring “Nah, you’ve got to stop interfering in Fred’s business Jim! He’ll not thank you for it.”

Jim spoke more slowly. “Roger. I have just heard Freddie tell Paul that he is not a fuck toy for his mates. Paul said Freddie needed to pay for the coke….in kind!”

“Jim, stop.” Roger held up his hand. “I spoke to Freddie about ten minutes ago. He’s fine, just a bit tired. Freddie can screw whoever he wants. You’re just pissed because it’s not you.” Roger laughed.

Jim rushed towards the bus door, but Roger was in his way.

“Prenter get your corrupt fucking arse out here right now!” yelled Jim in fury rapping on the bus side.

Roger blocked the door.

“Jim shut up!” he whispered. He jabbed a finger into the Jim’s temple. “Think man. We have the last gig tonight. Prenter is our manager. You think Freddie wants this gig called off?” reasoned Roger.

“No gig…” roared Jim “…is worth Freddie selling his soul for. Now move out of my fucking way before I fucking move you!”

“I know Fred a little better than you Jim. He would have told me, and fucked Prenter off.”

Jim rushed at Roger and knocked him bodily into the bus with a loud thud.

Roger’s hand was in Jim’s face clawing at his eyes, trying to get an advantage over the much larger man.
Equally enraged now, Roger pushed Jim hard away from him.

Jim swung his fist at Roger narrowly missing him, when Roger followed up with a quick jab that connected with Jim’s nose.

The shock seemed to slow him a little.

Roger try to appeal to his common sense.

“We’re going back to London tomorrow. I’ll collar Freddie then. Get him to tell me everything. Until then we’ll keep him busy. We’ve got the show, he won’t have time for Prenter.”

“In the meantime Prenter goes around drugging people and using Freddie as a rent boy!” Jim was in Roger’s face.

“Yes, that’s right!” Jim continued “He spiked my drink. In Manchester. I was trying to help Freddie, and Paul couldn’t stand it if I got Freddie’s attention instead of him.”

“Have you heard yourself?” asked Roger incredulous.

Roger’s question took Jim back to the morning that Brian was in his kitchen, after Freddie had woken up terrified in his bed.

Jim wasn’t logical then. He was under some sort of lust based spell that Freddie had cast over his body, making him incapable of keeping his hands and his thoughts to himself.

Not now. Now he had never been more logical.

He was stone fucking sober, and as he had grown to know Freddie, lust had extended to love.

Jim pushed Roger again “It’s not enough. I can’t stand by and watch Freddie be hurt like this!”

Wondering what all the commotion was about Brian appeared at the door, one finger to his lips, worried that the boys were being loud so early in the day.

Jim pushed Roger again. He wasn’t really trying to hurt him. He just wondered what the hell would get his attention.

“Jim, Roger, what you doing?” hissed Brian. “This isn’t like either of you…well, it might be like you Rog.” Brian said, trying to be factually correct. It wasn’t helping.

“Tell him….tell him!” Jim shouted at Roger.

“Jim. Shut up. We’ll discuss it tomorrow when we are back in London.” said Roger trying to calm the situation.

Jim threw his hands in the air in frustration with a roar.

He didn’t know what else he could do.

Roger was half right.

Jim had heard Freddie told in no uncertain terms by Paul that he was to screw men for drug money.

How could Jim go storming into the tour bus belonging to the band of which he was a guest, and punch that squirmy twat in the guts?!
If Freddie asked him too, he’d do it in a heartbeat, but Freddie was a grown man.

He wasn’t Jim’s man. He was Paul’s man.

Freddie had been fully informed, and he was making his decision.

Torn into a million pieces, and not knowing which piece was the right one. Jim threw the shopping at Brian, walked away, and kept on walking.

His last thought was why Freddie…..why is this OK?
Encounters: United Front

Chapter Summary

Jim reunites with the Queen boys, and renews his quest to help Freddie with fresh enthusiasm. They are finally all on the same page… but don’t tell Freddie….

Chapter Notes

Lovies – I just want to say a huge thank you for the support and interaction you have been giving me with this fic. It helps more than you know…

The crowd was going wild.
The atmosphere was different today.
The lighting looked great, the smoke creating an air of mystery.
There was a magnitude to all four members of Queen.
It seemed that the crowd from the previous night had returned with their Mum's and Dads.
Jim was pleased to see that security was much improved, with guards linking arms around the stage.
He knew the boys were all tired and excited about heading back off to London tomorrow, but there was no sign of it up on the stage.
As much as Jim wanted to rip Prenter’s head off, he’d had time to calm down. To retreat tactically.
Jim had been right in his first analysis - Prenter had been great in lining up gigs for the band, but catastrophic for Freddie personally.
Jim had to be smarter.
He had to find a way to keep Freddie safe – with or without Roger’s help.

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Jim made his way to the bar and ordered a pint.
He felt stupid for taking off earlier, and hoped that his new friends could forgive him for not helping them set up for tonight’s gig.
That’s what he was there for after all.
He’d pull twice his weight to get them packed up and home to London.
He also realised he couldn’t help Freddie if he wasn’t around.
He would have to control his temper for the greater good – the end game.

Falling out with Roger was not helping anyone, and ultimately Roger was not Freddie’s keeper.

He would also have to be civil around Prenter, if he was to get the drop on him.

Jim would have to beat him at his own game - that snake in the grass – he would have to get something really good on him, something that would see him out of Freddie’s life forever.

Jim was going to tell Brian everything though at first opportunity.

Out of the two men, Jim knew that once Brian had realised it was Jim Connors who had given Freddie’s those terrible bruises, it was Jim he trusted over Prenter.

Jim flashed his Queen badge and went into the storage room behind the stage.

He wanted to get a head start on packing their stuff up so they could celebrate their last night in Liverpool without any worries.

Jim could hear talking further into the room and he called out.

Jim’s initial concerns were for the safety of the band’s equipment.

“Everything OK?” he called out, to be polite because he had a feeling he would never get the truth.

Jim walked further towards the sound and asked again “I said is everything OK?”

The venue manager popped up from behind some of Roger’s spare kit looking very flustered and embarrassed. His eyes darted nervously towards the door, and he quickly made his escape.

He was followed by none other than Paul Prenter.

Paul didn’t even have the decency to look embarrassed, or even uncomfortable for that matter.

All in a day’s work for a smarmy son of a bitch.

Prenter slowly zipped up his trousers, and straightened his tie never once taking his eyes off Jim.

“It returns I see.” He smirked sarcastically. “I thought you had gone for good – or rather I was hoping.”

Remembering his ploy to the be smart one, the professional, the one that stayed ten feet ahead of the game, Jim spat sarcastically “That official Queen business is it?”

Prenter regarded him, taking him in slowly, like a snake ready to pounce.

“Why do you hang around? I know… I know all about your crush on little Freddie. He doesn’t see you. You know why? You are a nobody. Freddie is going places. He’s going to be a star. You are just Jim Hutton. Always trying to be the big man. He doesn’t need someone like you, holding him back, hanging onto his coat tails, gobbling up whatever crumbs he throws.”

Jim knew all this.
He’d had the same conversation with himself every day since he met Freddie, but he also had too much respect for himself to listen to it coming from a sewer rat like Prenter.

He took a deep calming breath.

“If you spent more time watching the band that you manage, you would notice that Freddie is already a star. He’s born for it. He’s got them eating out of the palm of his hand. The rest of the band are doing rather well too. Roger needs some help, he mentioned to me that he was struggling with both drums and percussion. Oh and Deaky, I’m fairly sure he’s struggling with the accounts now the company is growing. You might want to consider getting them some help, not just ‘little’ Freddie, who seems to be doing just great. Although he could do with a little more from his own boyfriend if you know what I mean.”

Jim flashed a look towards Prenter’s crotch. It was a low blow, and not the level he wished to stoop to, but he was on a roll.

Jim had been a far fairer opponent than Prenter deserved. Most men would have ripped his head off if they had heard this morning’s conversation.

“What do you mean?” stuttered Prenter “It’s not like we’re exclusive or anything.”

“Paul, I don’t care. They do. They are your band. Stop making a prick of yourself, and be their manager.”

The gig had been sensational.

Queen had returned to the stage for a second encore, and the house lights were turned down once more.

The boys – absolutely buzzing from their success - could have played all night. They pushed the limits of the venue’s music license as far as it would go.

After the show, the concert hall became a disco.

Jim, Brian, Roger and Deaky were leaned up against a podium enjoying a drink, shouting to each other over the music.

Roger was desperate for a shower, so didn’t pursue his usual string of adoring women.

It gave him and Jim the opportunity to talk.

Jim had made his apologies for his earlier behaviour, and begged his friends’ forgiveness.

Roger had already forgiven Jim, and had actually been quite worried that he had grossly misjudged him. He knew that caring for Freddie was a full time job - and then some!

Jim finally felt that the boys were listening to his concerns about Paul’s influence. They had all shaken hands, and Jim was relieved that there was no lasting animosity.

As a united team, they updated Deaky on their mutual concerns.
Brian as usual was the spokesperson, and he succinctly summarised the issue.

“Ok, so are we agreed that we all have some concerns about Paul? We agree that he has been fantastic for the band. This weekend has been phenomenal! That goes without saying. But….” He raised his finger in Jim’s direction “…Jim suspects…SUSPECTS…that Paul was behind him being ill the other night, and that Freddie is perhaps involved in something he can’t handle. What we need to be careful of….” He turned to Jim in earnest “…is that we don’t get too involved in Fred’s love life. It’s his business Jim. We are all here for him if he needs us, but we can’t go rocking the boat without his say so… especially as it could jeopardise the blood and sweat we’ve all put in this weekend. None of us like the man, but we cannot fault his skills as a manager. If the things you are accusing Paul of are true, we need to get some proof, and deal with it as a team – Freddie included. Get something good on him Jim. It’s got to be good enough to risk everything we have built up. Nothing is more important to Fred than his music. In the meantime, keep an eye on Fred, but for God’s sake don’t let him see you.”

After that scientific analysis of the situation, Jim could see Brian’s merits as both band leader, and scientist.

The man had a very level head on his shoulders.

Jim felt unstable by comparison – but then Brian wasn’t in love with Freddie Mercury.

Taking Brian’s words literally, the boys all looked around until they clocked Freddie. Freddie was all shimmery in silver, and the disco lights picked him out like a beacon.

The contrast between the shiny fabric of his outfit, and his ebony hair was striking.

Freddie was being piggy backed by one of the roadies. He was shrieking with laughter and having a fantastic time. The others in the surrounding group of men were chasing them around, the roadie trying to keep Freddie out of their clutches.

Freddie it seemed was struggling with discretion.

They were in a concert hall - not a gay bar.

It was fine to clown around with the lads, but he couldn’t be seen to kiss one of them.

The roadie dropped Freddie on his feet and pushed him up on the wall.

Freddie was all flirty glances and smiles. Gazing up at the roadie, enormous eyes through long eyelashes. Freddie was drawing him closer - like a little honeypot. A flash of his aroused eyes telling the man how badly he wanted him.

Like Jim in the weeks prior- the man was struggling for composure.

Jim was fascinated. “Look at that. Every gay man in the room wants him.”

“And some straight men” added Deaky with a smile.

Brian suddenly wondered to himself how he had ended up so embroiled in Freddie’s sex life.

Brian turned to Jim “Think you could keep up with that appetite?” he asked with a laugh.

He regretted his words instantly when Jim gestured exactly what he wanted to do to Freddie right now, whistled, and said “oh yeah.”
“Ey-up” said Brian nodding towards Prenter approaching Freddie.

Paul grabbed Freddie’s wrist and pulled him away from the roadie.

Roy Jenkins was hovering in the background.

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“But why is he like that?” asked Jim.

“This is why I was pissed off with you this morning Jim – you’re being judgmental. So many people judge Fred, I can’t stand it, he can screw whoever he likes!” said Roger, temper rising.

Jim held up both hands in surrender, and said calmly “Rog, there is no judgement here. I’m a gay Irish catholic. Back in my village I’m not even deemed worthy to judge Satan. I’m asking, it’s a question, I’m curious. Most men his age are either dabbling with the idea that they may be gay - just having their first gay experiences, or they have their first college boyfriend, or maybe even a girlfriend.”

“Fine, but I’m here, you can ask me. Leave Fred out of it. I like a good shag, or two, or three a night.” Roger grinned. “There’s nothing wrong with it, I’m a healthy young man. So is Fred.”

“I’m not saying there is anything wrong with it Rog, but you’re taking home college sweethearts. Freddie is taking hard seasoned men down back allies, and hoping they’ll play nice.”

“I think you miss the point mate, he doesn’t like them gentle.” Roger chuckled.

“Perhaps he has a Daddy kink” suggested Deaky jumping down from his stool. “Hey Jim, you’re up!” he chuckled, heading towards the bathroom.

“I’m only 26!!” yelled Jim with humour “I’m hardly middle aged.”

After the laughter had died down, Jim was still thinking.

“What’s Freddie’s Father like?” he asked tentatively.

Brian clutched his sides with laughter “Mr Bulsara – well he’s …..rather more cerebral.”

Everyone laughed, but Jim was still thoughtful.

“Bulsara? He’s not Freddie’s real Father?” He didn’t miss a trick when it came to Freddie.

Brian shook his head. “You need to ask Freddie mate, it’s not our business. In fact please don’t ask Freddie, but to answer your question, yes he is Freddie’s real Father.”

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Deaky ran up to the group clutching his chest, and gasping for air. “Lads come quickly. There’s
something wrong with Freddie. He won’t stop crying.”

Roger and Jim moved at the same time, running into the crowd behind Deaky.

They returned to where Freddie had last been seen, but he was no longer there.

He hadn’t gone far.

Freddie had crawled onto some steps beside the bar looking thoroughly exhausted, with tear tracks carved in his immaculately applied show make up.

Roger sank onto the step beside him.

Jim stood in front. Blocking Freddie from view. Providing the group with a little privacy.

“S’Up Fred?” asked Roger, and arm round his friends shoulders.

"I’m alright. I’m fine” Freddie said raising his hands and wiping his face.

“I just had an argument with Paul” he said with a very small voice “Then…” he seemed confused “I really don’t feel well.”

Freddie was dripping with sweat, and he was speaking between gasps for breath. He looked up at Jim, but couldn’t focus on his face.

“I can’t see properly. Everything is blurred and two bright.”

Jim felt for Freddie’s pulse at his wrist, it was hammering. He was also sweating too much for the consequences of an argument – no matter how heated.

He pulled at the fabric of Freddie’s top.

“Does this come off?” Jim asked.

Freddie nodded tiredly.

“Not all of it, just the top” Jim tried to joke, referring to Freddie’s cat suits and leotards. He’d been dying to get him naked - but not in this way.

Freddie helped Jim to pull his top off, instantly relieved by the cooling air.

Jim turned to Roger, who had jumped off the step and was scowling and scanning the room - presumably for Prenter.

“Roger can you get Freddie some water please?”

Roger appeared not to have heard Jim.

“Roger….water?” Roger nodded and headed towards the bar.

Once they were alone Jim sat on the step beside Freddie. He found himself with the same predicament that Freddie had shortly before.

He couldn’t touch Freddie here.

Not in the way he wanted to.
Freddie was becoming better known by the day, and there was always the risk of a lingering journalist.

Discreetly Jim sought out Freddie’s hand and squeezed. He looked exhausted.

“Do you want to tell me about your argument with Paul?” Jim asked softly.

Freddie shook his head “Not really.”

“How are you feeling now?”

“Tired. Weird.”

Deaky wandered towards them, looking very awkward, and out of place.

He stopped in front of Freddie and Jim momentarily, providing Jim with the privacy he needed to pull Freddie into his arms. It felt nice to hold him close - not under the circumstances - but it was like he was tethered back to earth.

The situation was far from acceptable, but at that very moment Freddie was safe, and Prenter was nowhere to be see.

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Deaky stood beside Freddie and Jim.

Freddie didn’t look well at all, but as usual Deaky went blank whenever he tried to think of something helpful to do or say.

Jim seemed to have taken matters into his own hands.

He couldn’t stand here for ever, but he didn’t know where else to go.

Out of the corner of his eye Deaky saw motion.

Someone was waving at him.

He narrowed his eyes to get a little focus. It was dark in the concert hall, but every so often the disco lights would flash disorientating him.

The person waved again.

Deaky could see a very large woman sitting at the end of the booth. She was enormous, with long grey plaited hair. She was wearing a leather waist coat, and even her tattoos appeared to have tattoos.

The woman waved again.

Deaky looked behind him to see if she was gesturing to someone else. She wasn’t. He pointed to his own chest, and she nodded.

Deaky wished Roger was here, he was so much better in these situations.

She waved again.
With no choice, Deaky cautiously walked over.

“He’s been spiked” Deaky informed Jim a little breathless.

“How do you know?” asked Jim jumping up.

Deaky pointed over to the booth “Large Marg just told me.” Jim peered around Deaky to where he was pointing at a terrifying looking woman.

“She saw the bloke he was with drop something into his drink when he was distracted by another bloke. Unfortunately Jim, Freddie is always surrounded by blokes so that doesn’t really narrow it down much.”

“Damn” roared Jim knocking his hand into the wall. A stranger identifying Prenter adulterating Freddie’s drink would be all the evidence they would need to finally rid Freddie of that snake for the rest of his life.

Jim realising his behaviour was doing nothing to soothe Freddie, sat back down calmly beside him.

He started to rub circles onto his back.

“Do you think you should go to the hospital?” Jim asked softly.

Freddie shook his head vigorously “No hospitals.”

Jim chuckled “Oh yeah, no hospitals.”

Freddie smiled weakly, he seemed a little calmer.

Roger appeared beside them with a glass of iced water which he gave to Freddie. He was still looking around his.

His search for Prenter must have been fruitless.

Deaky and Roger were making exaggerated disco dancing moves trying to make Freddie laugh.

Jim laughed out loud. Deaky must have been very concerned to draw attention to himself like that. He was a good friend to have. The very best.

It had the desired effect, Freddie started to giggle, and jumped up to join them.

Brian handed Jim a beer and sat beside him on the steps.

“Your work done for the day mate?” he asked sarcastically gesturing towards Freddie with his bottle.
Jim chuckled. “Yeah, I have my uses.”

Jim was silent for a moment.

“You’re very gentle with him. I think that’s missing from his relationship with Prenter” Brian said passive aggressively.

Jim thought hard about his next steps.

“He’s been spiked Brian. A stranger told Deaky. She saw it all. Unfortunately she couldn’t identify the man - there are so many men around our Freddie…” Jim smiled “…we can’t pin it on him.”

Brian looked down his nose at his beer. He stamped his foot. “Fuck!” he exclaimed loudly.

The two men sat in silence for a few minutes watching Deaky, Roger and Freddie tear up the dance floor.

“He seems happy now” said Brian.

“Freddie might not be as happy generally as he puts across mate” said Jim conspiratorially.

Brian looked up surprised “Did he say something to you?”

“Not quite, but the irony is not lost on me that Prenter spent the whole day yesterday setting up for the gig, and I took his boyfriend to an art gallery.”

Brian laughed out loud. “You are wily Hutton.”

“He’s a different person with me – calmer – it surprised me a little. If Prenter hadn’t have disturbed him yesterday I think Freddie might have been happy to lie in my lap all day. Not a side I see of him often.”

At that moment Prenter made an appearance, and gestured Brian over.

He had fresh scratches on his neck.

Jim hoped the other guy had won.

As Brian slowly stood to leave, Jim grabbed his arm.

“Slowly, slowly catchy monkey Bri.”

Brian smiled softly.
Encounters: Buttercup Syrup

Chapter Summary

The Queen boys are back in London and half the team have a cold.

Chapter Notes

Lovies – This is a cute little snapshot into the boys’ domestic life – enjoy!

The royal household was quiet well into the early hours of the afternoon, as one by one the boys crawled from their beds in their sleepwear into the living room, settling down in front of the TV, not even bothering to open the curtains.

Everything ached from their exertion, but they were all thoroughly satisfied with their weekend.

Roger had the beginnings of a cold, and was feeling very sorry for himself.

Freddie also was sniffling when he shuffled into the living room, and snuggled up against Paul on the sofa, wrapping them both in his blanket, and promptly falling back to sleep.

Jim and Paul had slept downstairs in the living room.

Jim had deliberated over just going home, having had as much of Prenter as any man could take, but he’d taken one look at Freddie still shaking from his encounter and wanted to stay nearby.

For once, Brian had let his hair down and looked nearly as shocking as the others - but not quite.

Deaky had gone straight home. Being the youngest member of the band - and not officially living with them - he had gone to his parents for a rare night, after they had complained about his using their home as a hotel.

Brian was the only member of the band dressed, so he was nominated to do the breakfast run.

He was also going to pick up some soup for the invalids.

As he was leaving Roger called to him “Bri, can you get me some Buttercup Syrup please?”

Brian looked confused “You haven’t got a cough Rog.”

“No, but I feel awful, and it tastes so good” Roger tried to smile sweetly emulating Freddie.

“Brimi can you get me something nice” Freddie’s voice was nearly gone completely.

Brian knew from the use of his pet name that Freddie really was not feeling good.

Brian rolled his eyes and headed out the door.
Sometimes he resented feeling like the parent, but he couldn’t deny he loved his boys.

He reflected on how different they all were as people, and tried to imagine what their relationship would have been like if they had met at school.

He allowed himself a smile.

Him and Freddie would never have been friends. Art and science – how would that have worked?!

Brian had always sat at the front of the class, enraptured by physics and natural sciences, whereas Freddie always sat in the middle with his head down, doodling.

Knowing Freddie now, Brian couldn’t imagine him how he had described himself at school - the smallest boy, very shy, and very easily bullied due to his sensitive nature and prominent teeth.

It had surprised him that Freddie had spoken about his school days at all. He was famously tight lipped about his life before having arrived in London.

And Roger – well Roger was just too cool for school.

It was Deaky that Brian was most similar too, and probably that was the case now.

Though Brian was no engineer, he was fascinated by the equipment they used, and how it all fit together.

Freddie on the other hand was always astounded when his voice came out of the other end of a microphone.

Brian smiled again, thinking about the time Freddie had blown up the kettle, because Deaky had asked him to boil the pasta.

Paul Prenter bothered him - and more so after hearing Jim out.

No doubt Paul had got them a lot of work - and for that he was grateful - but there was always a shadow.

Always something lurking.


He worried about Freddie.

He didn’t seem to be getting much from their relationship, and they were always having to constantly guide his focus back to the music, back to writing, and practicing.

As their manager, the band’s success was very much in Paul’s interest, but he seemed to be having a very disruptive, subversive effect on Freddie.

It was counterproductive.

Then there was Jim. What a find he was.

Besides their rocky start, he was a good sound friend.

Brian trusted him.
He was a man of his word, and only ever helped, even if that meant simply rolling his sleeves up, or doing the beer run.

He wished the blinkers would come off, and that Freddie would really see Jim.

There was love there. Brian was sure. He was also fairly sure that Freddie wouldn’t be able to identify love if it was presented under a microscope.

It saddened Brian, although he would never interfere.

He would not touch Freddie’s love life with a barge pole.

He valued his own life too much.

Brian would leave that to the stars, nature had a funny way of taking its course.

Jim got up to put the kettle on.

It wouldn’t be long before he was due back at work.

No rest for the wicked.

He made tea all round for which Roger was particularly grateful as he was starting to suffer with a sore throat.

Freddie’s tea sat steaming on the table. He had fallen back to sleep again.

There was very little conversation.

Everyone stared at the TV blankly.

Freddie awoke with a cough, and a series of sneezes.

He really did not feel good.

He sat up looking around all confused and covered his eyes, squeezing his aching head.

“I need my bed” he announced to the room, although very little sound was coming out of his mouth.

He squeezed Paul’s hand “Come bed with me” it was more of a statement than a question.

Paul sniggered “No offence Fred, but you’re not looking all that attractive to me right now” he said laughing.

“No. You idiot. Just ….come with me.”

Paul was astounded by the notion. “Are you mad?! I don’t want to catch my death too. Besides you need to sleep that off.”

“Please” said Freddie with a very small voice.
“I’m going in a bit anyway” said Paul. “There’s no work being done today.”

Freddie looked crestfallen, but didn’t have the energy to argue. He felt like he might fall where he stood, so he quietly left the room.

Jim was so angry he thought his heart was going to leap right out of his chest with the effort of holding the emotion inside “You heartless bastard” he spat at Paul.

“What?” Paul glared at Jim open mouthed “It’s a fucking cold!”

“Yes, and they’re miserable. We’ve all had them. Can’t you just indulge him for once?!”

Paul tutted. “What a great little housewife you’ll make someday.”

Paul stooped to pick up his jacket, smiling sarcastically. “My work here is done. I’m off. Don’t have too much fun without me” he winked.

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Brian walked back through the door as Paul waltzed out.

Jim joined Brian in the kitchen, angry energy pulsing through him.

He wanted to rant, but after his confrontation with Roger yesterday, he didn’t feel he should air his feelings about the band manager again today. He had said his piece.

Jim flicked on the kettle again and reached for the Earl Grey.

“You alright Jim? You look stressed” asked Brian concerned.

Jim shook his head. “Fucking Prenter” he said softly trying not to be overheard. “Don’t worry about it Brian, honestly”

“Are you sure?” said Brian folding double as he reached into the cupboard under the sink and pulled out a hot water bottle. “You know mate, you can get it off your chest. We do appreciate your opinion.”

Jim thanked Brian, but shook his head.

His rant could wait for another day.

Jim nodded towards the hot water bottle in Brian’s hand.

“Have you got another one of those?”

Brian put his hand back into the cupboard and pulled out a pink one.

Brian laughed “Sorry mate, it was my Mum’s.”

Jim laughed too releasing his tension. “Actually, that’s perfect.”

He filled the pink bottle from the kettle, and made a fresh cup of Earl Grey.
Jim glanced at the bottle of Buttercup Syrup on the side.

“What’s that?” he asked Brian.

Brian laughed “It’s children’s cough medicine. Rog asked for it. I must admit, out of all the horrid medicines we had as children, this does taste really good.”

Jim picked up a tray, placing the hot water bottle and the cup of tea on it.

He picked up the Buttercup Syrup and slipped it in his pocket, heading for Freddie’s room.

Brian smiled. It was funny how nature did take its course.

How the cosmos interfered in areas that even angels feared to tread.

Jim might just be that angel that up until now had feared to tread.

*****************

Jim knocked quietly and pushed open the door to the room that Freddie and Roger shared.

His eyes took a little time to adjust to the dark, but when they had he could make out some taper candles on the cabinet beside Freddie’s bed.

He took out his cigarette lighter and lit them, bathing the room in a soft comforting light.

Freddie was awake, but his face was swollen and streaming with cold. He looked flush, but was shivering.

Jim sat softly on the bed beside him. He pulled back Freddie’s blanket and passed him the hot water bottle which Freddie cuddled eagerly.

Freddie glanced up at the tray on the bedside table. He then clocked the bottle of medicine Jim pulled from his pocket, frowned and croaked “What’s that?”

Jim chuckled. “It’s medicine. Cough medicine actually, but as you have lost your voice I think you qualify. Apparently it tastes really good.”

Freddie pulled a face, not trusting that any medicine could taste good.

Jim poured some onto his tea spoon and sniffed at it.

He nodded “That does actually smell pretty good.”

He offered the spoon to Freddie who eyed it with suspicion, but took the medicine offered to him.

His eyes lit up as he swallowed “Mmmmm, that is good” he nodded “can I get some more?”

Jim filled up the spoon once more chuckling. If the medicine is for children, he wasn’t going to overdose Freddie.

He took the opportunity to plump up Freddie’s pillows before he flopped back down, with hardly the energy to keep his eyes open.
“Jim?” he whispered making hardly any sound.

“Mmmmm?” said Jim as he crawled into the space behind Freddie, wrapping his arms around him and holding him close to his chest.

“Why do I feel so shit?” Jim could have laughed out loud. It was such a childish sweet thing to ask.

“Because you are run down” he said. “You have spent the weekend giving your all on stage, singing your little heart out. You’ve been nervous and excited. You’ve been drinking ….and drugging” he emphasised giving Freddie a teasing tickle, but he couldn’t even raise a giggle from him.

“You haven’t had any rest.”

“But I need my voice” Freddie croaked sadly “I can’t sing without it.”

Jim kissed Freddie’s temple “Stop using it then” he teased good naturedly. “Freddie, go to sleep.”

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Jim didn’t want to move from this spot.
He felt fuzzy headed, warm and comfortable. He could afford to keep his eyes closed a little longer.
He felt hair tickling his nose, and smelt light perfume.
Freddie.
He felt extremely warm, and Jim squeezed him a little tighter, scattering kisses into his hair and at his temple.
Jim slowly opened his eyes and was surprised to see it was daylight.

Suddenly a tray appeared in front of him “Tea?” inquired a disembodied voice.

“Jaysus, fuck!” Jim exclaimed, leaping off the bed, and knocking his head on the underside of the tray Roger was hold is his hands.
The contents of the tray went flying into the air crashing down on the carpet leaving a long brown stain, followed by lumps of sugar and milk.
Jim followed.
Catching his foot on the plug of a straightening iron that had been left carelessly on the floor.

“Yow!” he yelped, falling onto his knees in his hurry to get out of the bed.
Roger and Freddie howled with laughter.
Freddie was not at all cross at his rude awakening, as Jim tried to collect himself.

“What the fuck time is it? I was supposed to be at work last night” stressed Jim hands in his hair.

“Jim” Roger said calmly “It’s Tuesday.”
“What the fuck?!?” he screeched as he headed for the bedroom door and ran down the stairs.

On the plus side he could still hear Roger and Freddie giggling. He smiled. They were feeling better, and Freddie had his voice back.

“Did he just spoon you all night?” he heard Roger ask in a very high pitch.

“Maybe” answered Freddie coyly “Shut up Blondie! I feel better.”

“You’re his Freddie Bear!” Roger sang.
Encounters: Remote Viewing

Chapter Summary

Paul has taken Freddie away for the day so the rest of the group head off for a few drinks. Before long they catch up with Freddie, but is he having as much fun as he seems to be?

Chapter Notes

Bless poor Jim ☹️ He needs a night off!

Jim’s boss was determined to make the rest of his life a living hell.

Jim had gone straight to The Market Tavern from the royal household – not entirely sure where in the week he was, and how many shifts he had missed.

His boss was behind the bar actually pulling beer when Jim ran in. This was not going to be pleasant.

“It lives” said his boss sarcastically. “We were taking bets on you being dragged out of the Thames in a few days. What the fuck Hutton?”

“I’m so sorry boss. I don’t even know where to begin.” Jim’s hands were in his hair again. “When am I rostered on next?”

Jim’s boss threw the bar towel at him.

“Right now, and you can forget about having a social life for the rest of the week. You’re a good sort Hutton, but one more strike and you’re out. I need reliable staff to run my pub.”

Jim apologised once more before taking his first order.

It was going to be a very long week.

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It was indeed an exceptionally long week.

It had been three days since Jim had left Freddie in bed, and his boss wasn’t letting up.

He couldn’t visit the boys after work, it was always so late, and he didn’t just want to turn up in the middle of the night.

He ached with wanting to know how Freddie was. Was he well again? Was his voice back? Perhaps
more importantly, were the boys keeping him safe from Prenter?

Jim’s heart leapt when on his fourth work day, Brian, Roger and Deaky filed into the pub looking exceptionally glum.

Freddie wasn’t with them.

“I’m so glad to see you blokes” Jim enthused shaking each of their hands like he hadn’t seen them since Christmas.

“Why so gloomy?”

“Fucking Prenter” said Roger.

“Oh” said Jim ominously. “How’s Freddie?”

“He’s alright” said Brian. “He’s feeling a lot better.”

“Yeah, not as good as Prenter seems to think he is though.” added Deaky.

Brian took a breath, and started at the beginning.

“Prenter’s got Freddie doing a demo this morning for a record label.”

Jim smiled “What are you blokes doing here then?” he asked confused.

“Not Queen ….just Freddie.” Deaky rolled his eyes.

“Prenter is trying to get Freddie into different kinds of music – mainly disco, the club scene. He’s feeling better, but his voice is not up to auditioning. Not to mention how nervous and awkward he felt this morning. He even snapped at Roger because he felt so bad that Prenter had singled him out.”

That was a long speech for Deaky.

Jim shook his head. His heart heavy for the pressure Freddie must be feeling. He didn’t do well among strangers without his nearest and dearest.

“Why doesn’t he just say no?” inquired Jim.

“Zoroastrian 101” said Brian. “Find your happiness in the happiness of others” he mimicked.

“Bless you” said Jim as though Brian had sneezed. “I don’t understand a word you’ve just said mate.”

“Freddie was raised a Zoroastrian. I don’t know if he is still practicing, but he has all the markings of a religious doctrine.”

“I’m sorry….what is a Zoroastrian?” asked Jim struggling with the word, and mentally logging it so he could look it up later.

“It’s his religion” said Brian.

“Freddie is religious?” asked Jim incredulous.

Freddie was like an advent calendar – a surprise each day.

“How does Freddie’s religion feel about homosexuality? If it’s anything like Catholicism, he will be
nursing a massive guilt hangover.”

“Think bigger” said Roger. “In the part of the world that Freddie is from homosexuals can still be stoned to death.”

Jim whistled, his eyes were wide as he weighed up Roger’s words – or as much as he could bear to.

“Sorry…I’m still not following…” said Jim after a moment’s consideration “….why does that mean he can’t say no to Prenter?”

“Basically …” Brian took a deep breath. He didn’t really understand the faith himself, and he didn’t want to dismiss something he didn’t fully understand. “…the faith is very social. Zoroastrian’s celebrate light and joy, and the eternal flame that has burnt for thousands of years. Zoroastrian’s worship with singing and dancing, their joy is in making others happy. Therefore Freddie is the world’s biggest….”

 “…people pleaser” Jim and Deaky finished Brian’s sentence in unison.

“Oh bless him” said Jim, missing his own unintended play on religion. “So Freddie will use his voice to make Prenter, and the record label happy. Not himself, not you blokes who really matter to him, and at the expense of his own health.” Jim was trying to explain it as much to himself, as to the others.

His heart felt heavy again.

“Jim…” said Deaky “when was the last time you got out mate? When did you last go out on the town? Have yourself a beer? Do something that wasn’t in aid of our great Mr Mercury?”

Jim scratched his head. He wasn’t quite following Deaky’s line of questioning.

“Well, after Freddie turned me into a red hot, sex obsessed automaton, I kind of barred myself from clubbing. Why do you ask?”

“What time do you knock off? You need to chill.”

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Jim, Brian, Deaky and Roger filed into a red leather booth at Heaven.

The disco beat was throbbing, and the boys could barely shout over it, but they were there to have fun – not to talk.

Deaky had been right. Jim couldn’t remember the last time he had been out with friends, relaxed, and just had a laugh.

In fact, the last time he had been in here was when he had been covering his friend’s shift, and he had found Freddie sleeping on the sofa, and had taken him home.

The boys voted, and Roger lost. It was his turn to buy the drinks.

He approached the table with four tall glasses. All filled with a pink frothing liquid that looked like it would be better placed in a cauldron. Each glass boasted an umbrella, a candy striped straw, and a
“What the fuck?” laughed Jim whipping the umbrella out of his drink and dumping it unceremoniously on the table still dripping.

Roger grinned “Pink drinks”

“What?” asked Deaky frowning.

“Pink drinks” Roger repeated. “Tonight’s special. Two for one. It’s meant to be a mix of champagne, gin, and pink grapefruit. Try it, it’s less sweet than you think.”

The boys each took a sip of their drink nodding with appreciation. They were good.

“Oh my God” shouted Roger grinning broadly. “Fred would love these!”

The boys clinked their glasses to their absent friend.

“You raise a very good point my friend” said Deaky. “Why are we here?” The boys looked confused.

“Why did we automatically come to a gay bar?”

Deaky turned to Jim “Jim, are you on the pull this evening?” Jim shook his head.

“Anyone else want to take a man home?” They all collapsed in giggles.

Deaky raised his glass again “To Freddie, who has the power to make our decisions for us even when he is not around.”

They all laughed loudly. “Freddie!”

As if summoned, Freddie appeared within their line of sight.

He was making his way over to a large table up front where Paul had just sat down.

Freddie had a pink drink and was smiling at the umbrella, he also seemed to be carrying a drink for Paul.

He popped the drink down in front of Paul, and stood beside him.

Paul slung his arm loosely around Freddie, fingers splayed possessively across Freddie’s buttocks.

Paul was the life and soul. Freddie his willing trophy.

Freddie was shirtless, and wearing a pair of leather pants that appeared to have been spray painted onto his body with a very fine spray gun. He had a tie slung loosely around his collarbone.

Jim felt his consciousness torn in two.

He wanted to do Freddie over the booth back, right here in the club.
Jim was stunned by how quickly his own body reacted, he couldn’t stand right now without the indignity of a school boy.

God, Freddie was so attractive!

Jim also felt uncomfortable, almost squirmy. If he had reacted so physically to Freddie’s appearance, then more unscrupulous men surely had.

He looked over Freddie with an objective eye. Despite being sexy beyond his own comprehension, something didn’t look right, and it didn’t take Jim long to realise what it was.

Freddie was too young. He didn’t own his own sexual power yet.

In ten years’ time his ensemble would make an incredible stage costume. Freddie would grow into his own power, knowing exactly when to woo with sex, and when to retreat, but right now part of Jim wanted to throw his jacket around Freddie’s shoulders. To hold him close under his arm, so that no one could encroach on him with their own desires.

For a moment he considered the difference between how he would like to hold Freddie, and the way Paul was.

Paul was showing ownership – possession – but Freddie was also on display. Other men could look, but they could only touch if cold hard cash changed hands.

As if relaying his own thoughts a pack of men entered the bar, and stood just behind Jim.

He could over hear their lurid conversation about both Freddie and another man that Freddie was dancing with.

The man was around Freddie’s age, perhaps one of his college friends and they seemed to be having a good time.

“Watch this” Jim heard one of the man say to the pack as he made his way over to Freddie.

Jim turned to Roger at exactly the same time that Roger turned to him – they were on the same page.

The men stood and made their way over to Freddie.

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Roger got there first and wrapped his arm around Freddie’s neck in a faux choke hold.

Freddie turned and flung his arms around Roger shrieking “Rogee” as though he hadn’t seen his friend in a millennium.

“Dance with me” Freddie pulled on Roger’s arm and steered him towards the dance floor.

Jim hung back a little. He didn’t relish having to dive into these situations, and if Roger could diffuse it with a little disco fever, that would be a good outcome for all involved.

If only life worked that way.

The man had been joined by the rest of his friends on the dance floor, and they surrounded Roger, Freddie, and Freddie’s friend.
With hindsight, Jim conceded that with Roger’s angelic good looks, he probably hadn’t been the best person to send in either.

Freddie broke away from Roger having seen something he liked.

He made his way into the circle of men, and started to dance.

The men started to grab at Freddie, who was completely in awe, lapping up the attention as though he was delivering a Queen song.

Jim observed Freddie’s movements. They were high energy, but sloppy. He wasn’t displaying a fraction of the control he did on stage.

Jim raised his gaze to Freddie’s face. His smile was bright but fixed, his gaze direct but unfocused.

Jim knew from Freddie’s movements that it wasn’t just alcohol.

Freddie was high.

In all likelihood he didn’t even know where he was right now.

Jim cast a quick glance at Freddie’s forearms. He wasn’t really close enough to do a proper inspection, but he didn’t think he could see any needle tracks.

There were a number of bruises that could have covered puncture sites, but they could also be from fingers clutching too tight. He had to hope for the best.

Perhaps it was coke.

The men started to reach out for him in unison. There must have been five of them groping at him, touching his body as though it was their own.

Jim glanced at Prenter. He was delighted. Not even concerned about the man he called his.

It seemed Prenter liked owning the brightest thing in the room – the object of all desire – but he didn’t care for him, or appreciate who he had in the slightest.

Freddie was entertainment to him. A little earner.

Freddie must have begun to feel a little crowded, because he started to push the men away.

The harder he pushed, the closer they came.

Jim could barely see Freddie now as like a pack of animals they all crowded in around him.

Jim stepped forward, and saw Roger go in low, arms flailing in all directions to reach his friend.

Jim grabbed two of the men and pulled them apart.

Freddie was just out of his grasp when Jim felt blows from behind. He wouldn’t be deterred. He grabbed Freddie’s wrist and pulled him hard from the fray. Freddie came hurtling towards Jim who pulled him to his chest, sheltering his head as the punches rained down on them.

It wasn’t enough, Roger was getting a beating.

“Roger!” screamed Freddie trying to pull away from Jim to get to his friend.
Holding onto Freddie tightly, Jim moved towards Roger.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a head above the others as Brian dove in, followed behind by Deaky who was trying to shelter himself from two men.

Jim felt Freddie being pulled carefully from his arms.

He held on tighter, but when he turned, he looked into a large chest with a badge.

Security.

He nodded his thanks and released Freddie, before turning back to the pile of men.

Roger had broken free and was like a wild animal. Shouting and punching and kicking at a man on the floor.

Brian and Deaky stood back with their hands raised as more security made their way over.

Jim all but picked up Roger by his arms.

“Roger come on! Retreat. Come on”. It was like restraining a mad man, and Brian had to help Jim.

Jim got close and whispered in Roger’s ear “We have to go now! Do it for Freddie.”

Roger backed off red faced with his hands in the air.

Jim grabbed Roger and pushed him back towards their booth, raising his hands at the security men. It’s over. We can control our friends, he told them with a gesture.

The boys were all breathing hard when they collapsed into their seats. Roger was covering his eye with his hand.

“I had him Jim, why the fuck did you pull me off” he growled.

“Tactical retreat” said Jim. “If we get barred from here, where do you think Prenter is going to bring Freddie every night of the week? We won’t be able to get in here to watch him.”

Roger nodded. What Jim said made a lot of sense. He removed his hand from his eye, it was swelling by the second. He also had a bloody lip.

Jim could sense Prenter looking over at them from his table. It’s funny how humans could register threat, as though with a sixth sense.

Freddie was sitting on Prenter’s lap.

His spine was curved over and he looked exhausted. The playful spirit had gone from him. Jim hoped he hadn’t been injured in the fight.

Prenter raised his eyebrows at Jim, and gave him a smarmy smile.

Jim raised his glass, challenge accepted.

Jim didn’t know how, and he didn’t know when, but Prenter was going down.
Freddie crept up to the booth and silently sat down beside Roger.  

He rubbed his cheek affectionately against Roger’s shoulder. “I’m sorry that you got in a fight coz of me Roger. I didn’t mean for that to happen to you.”  

Roger turned to him and gave him a quick squeeze. “It wasn’t your fault Freddie. Don’t worry about it.”  

Freddie winced when he saw Roger’s battered face.  

He pulled Roger into a hug and kissed his cheek “I’m still sorry though.”  

Jim reached across the table and squeezed Freddie’s hand “Where’s Prenter?” he asked.  

Freddie shook his head tiredly “I don’t know.”  

Freddie folded his arms on the table and rested his head on them.  

Minutes later he looked up blankly and said “It’s just….. I don’t feel well. I want to go home.”  

Jim stood and went to Freddie, feeling his forehead with the back of his hand. He did feel unnaturally warm.  

Jim went to the bar to get him some water.  

When Jim returned Freddie was still resting his head on his arms.  

Jim placed the glass of iced water on the table in front of him, but Freddie didn’t move.  

Jim stroked his hair out of his face, but he eyes were closed. He carefully raised Freddie’s eyelid, and met resistance.  

Jim leaned over the table to Brian.  

“Brian” Jim said softly. “Be discreet, go outside and flag a taxi please. When it arrives come back and get us. It’s important that you don’t draw any attention to yourself. We need to leave now, and undetected. Freddie is unconscious.”
Encounters: Evidence

Chapter Summary

Jim takes control when it becomes apparent that Freddie is really quite unwell – but will he ever do as he’s told, and what motivates his behaviour?

Has Prenter had his day?

Chapter Notes

Lovies – I am not endorsing drinking and driving. Society was a lot different in the 1970’s, so this is a typical attitude of the era.

Jim had kept Freddie snuggled under his arm all the way home in the taxi, but he was yet to regain consciousness.

He was grateful that all of the boys were there. The taxi driver hadn’t noticed them shuffle an unconscious person into the back between them. The police would surely have been called.

Jim quickly checked Freddie’s arms for needle tracks, or any evidence of what he may have taken.

He was grateful that there was no sign of anything more sinister than a few dark bruises.

Whatever it was, Freddie couldn’t handle it, but at least the very worst wasn’t the cause.

Although crippled with concern, Jim was partially glad that Freddie hadn’t woken up in the back of the taxi. He was nervous that Freddie might react with fear, the same as he had the last time he had awoken in Jim’s company, after being drugged by Jim Connors.

Brian paid the taxi driver and waved him off with a smile. His actions prevented the driver from seeing Jim lift Freddie out of the car, and carry him up the path into the house.

As soon as the taxi was out of sight, Brian ran up the driveway and locked the door behind himself.

Deaky was sitting on the sofa, very pale and wringing his hands.

He pointed Brian towards the stairs.

Brian took them two at a time.

Freddie was tucked up in his bed.

Jim was holding one hand, and Roger the other.

Jim leaned over Freddie listening to him breathing for a few moments, with two fingers on the pulse at his neck.
Jim rubbed his knuckles hard on Freddie’s chest “Come on darling” he pleaded “Come back to us.”

Freddie flinched at the sudden pain, but didn’t fully regain consciousness.

Jim noticed Brian enter the room “Brian. Call the doctor please.”

“The doctor?” Brian raised his eyebrows. “Shouldn’t he be in a hospital?”

“No.” Jim said firmly. “His vitals are strong. He’s breathing well, but he is very poorly. We can hardly explain at the hospital why Freddie is high on illegal substances.”

Brian gasped. He was not familiar with recreational drugs, and would not have spotted it. He knew that Roger and Freddie’s lifestyle was a bit more exciting than his own, but he was horrified to think what Freddie might be getting himself involved in.

Not for the first time, Brian was grateful for Jim.

“Tell the doctor he has a very high fever.” Jim paused, and smiled lightly at Brian “Besides, if he could talk, I suspect Freddie would say something like ‘no hospitals’” mimicked Jim attempting a bit of light humour.

Weak coughing came from the bed “Don’t take me to the hospital. I’m tired” croaked Freddie.

Roger flung his arms around him, nearly rendering him unconscious again – this time with suffocation.

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Doctor Atkinson strode into the room purposefully swinging his bag.

He looked down at Freddie who was sleeping again - peacefully this time.

The doctor placed a hand on Freddie’s head, and pulled back his blanket. “He’s too hot for all this” he said waving a hand over the entire bed area, including Roger who was still holding his hand.

The doctor noticed Freddie’s unusual bed attire, and raised an eyebrow.

His attention went from Freddie’s leather trousers, to Roger’s glowing eye socket.

With the drama of what had happened to Freddie, they had completely forgotten about how Roger might appear to a doctor.

The doctor raised Freddie’s eyelids one by one, and shone his torch into his eyes.

Freddie was not impressed at having been woken so abruptly, and was trying to push the doctor’s hands away from his face.

“Who is next of kin?” barked the doctor.

The boys looked at each other.

“Where are the boy’s parents?”

Jim took charge.
“Freddie is older than he looks doctor, he lives independently. This is his home. These boys…” he gestured to the others “…are his immediate family.”

The doctor looked at Roger again, and addressed Jim.

“This boy is clearly under the influence. Where are his parents?”

“Doctor, these are Freddie’s flatmates. He lives here” stressed Jim.

“And who are you?

“I’m…” Jim stuttered “Jim Hutton….a friend. I’m first aid trained. I brought Freddie round and took his vitals.”

“Where did you receive your training?”

“Erm…I’m security trained. Errr …bar …bar security.” Suddenly Jim felt very inadequate.

The doctor shone his light into Freddie’s eyes again, as he struggled to sit up groaning at the intrusion.

Clutching his head he grumbled “Ow, stop it! These are my family” he croaked.

“Lie down” said the doctor firmly.

“The police will be notified.” The doctor said sternly.

Brian went pale. Their home was registered to his parents.

Jim took a deep breath. “Doctor Atkinson, you are smart enough to realise that Freddie is under the influence of a banned substance. You will also be smart enough to realise that everyone else in this room is not. We are not operating a drug den here. Freddie has been out today. Judging by the state of him, it’s highly unlikely that he would be able to identify the person who supplied him. He has come home to us in this state, and we want to look after him. If we were complicit we wouldn’t have called a doctor for him. Now please tell us what we can do to get him well again? He was ill just a couple of days ago – with a bad cold – could this be connected?”

Brian thought Roger was going to hug Jim in front of the doctor.

The doctor turned back to Freddie and asked to him to open his mouth.

He peered into Freddie’s throat, then put a thermometer into his mouth. He started to feel at Freddie’s throat and ears, catching a hand to the back of his head as he tried to nervously backed away.

When the doctor put the cold stethoscope to Freddie’s chest, Jim had to stifle a laugh. He actually thought Freddie might slap the doctor’s hand.

Jim was struck again by the complexity that was Freddie Mercury.

He allowed men that could potentially do him harm to touch him in the most private way possible, but wouldn’t allow the doctor to take his temperature.

“Any vomiting?” the doctor asked Freddie.

Freddie shook his head, and swallowed hard “I feel sick though.”
“I agree that Freddie does have a very high temperature, and swollen glands. I must stress that the main risk to his health however is the substance he has taken. He is severely dehydrated, and his body is struggling to cope with the amounts consumed. He needs to stay in bed, and re-hydrate. Water!” the doctor stressed, as though he thought they might ply him with champagne.

“I must stress if I get called to this boy again…”

“I’m a man doctor” said Freddie “do you want to see what I can do with a ….”

“Freddie!” Brian interrupted him.

“If I’m called here again to this boy in this state” the doctor continued more firmly “I will notify the police, and that is not a threat.”

He turned his attention to Roger “What happened to your eye young man?”

“Got in a fight” Roger mumbled.

The doctor walked around the bed and checked Roger for broken bones. Brian was wringing his hands. “I know this looks terrible doctor, but we are good people honestly.”

“Hmmmm” said the doctor packing up his bag.

He turned to Freddie. “I will be back to see you in 48 hours. Stay in bed, and drink as much water as you can manage.”

He turned to Jim as though he was Freddie’s father “Make sure he does as he is told, and call me if you are concerned.”

Jim shook the doctors hand and showed him out.

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When Jim made his way back up the stairs and into Freddie’s room, Roger, Brian, and now Deaky were sitting around Freddie’s bed nattering as though they hadn’t spoken in months.

Freddie was loving it. Lapping up the attention, and putting on a fantastic performance.

Jim smiled softly watching him from the doorway.

He needed a little time to calm down himself.

To tell himself that Freddie was alright, and despite the numerous risks he had faced today, he was home, safe in his bed, and regaling the household with highly exaggerated anecdotes from the fight.

They had to get him away from Paul Prenter.

It wasn’t optional.

Freddie couldn’t handle whatever Prenter was supplying him with, and there would be more instances like this if he wasn’t stopped.
Mid-sentence Freddie stopped to yawn. The kind of yawn that is much like a black hole; threatening to engulf everything in its vicinity.

Jim clapped loudly from the doorway, as though he was announcing that the bar was closing, and everyone had to go home.

“Right, come on, out everyone. You heard the doctor. Freddie needs to sleep.”

It was funny how quickly Jim had not only been accepted into the royal household, but had been accepted as an authority on what Freddie needed.

Brian and Deaky stood to leave, but Roger remained. “It’s my room too” he argued “I want to stay.”

“Please Dad” Freddie giggled, but his voice was nearly all gone again.

Jim approached the bed, and held out his arms to give Freddie a hug.

Freddie exaggerated his reach up to Jim, wrapping his arms around his neck as though he was indeed his child.

Jim couldn’t help but chuckle.

If only Freddie knew what Jim would like to do to him most days!

Jim pressed a kiss to Freddie’s cheek. “Get some good rest. I’m so pleased that you are OK.”

“My hero” said Freddie pulling Jim closer and giving his a loud kiss on the lips.

Jim realised his face must have been the colour of beetroot.

That was Freddie.

He always had the ability to shock – even from his sick bed.

When Freddie realised that his friends actually did intend to leave him, he became quite agitated.

“Don’t leave me up here alone” he said all hints of fun gone. “I’ll come down and lie on the sofa with you guys.”

He started to get out of bed.

“No.” said Jim firmly. ‘You heard the doctor, you need to stay in bed and sleep. I’ll get you some water.”

“I don’t like being on my own.” Freddie was pouting, but Jim was concerned that he looked genuinely distressed.

Jim collared Roger at the bottom of the stairs.

“Roger, I know this is a very weird thing to ask, but will you be going to bed yourself shortly?”

“Hadn’t really thought about it mate, why?”

“Maybe I’m over reacting….maybe it’s nothing.” Jim wasn’t sure how to continue, “actually maybe it’s some sort of trip…”

“You’re not tripping as well are you Jim?” Roger chuckled.
“No. It’s Freddie. He’s just made a massive thing about not being left alone. I actually feel guilty for leaving him - a grown man in own his bedroom.” Jim laughed, but Roger was not amused.

“It’s not weird. It’s Freddie. I told you before he doesn’t like to be on his own. It’s just him. Are you going back up now?”

Jim was even more mystified by Roger’s reaction.

“Yes, I’m just getting him some water.” Jim paused then said “Is he never on his own?” Jim thought he would actually go mad if he didn’t have a little time to himself.

“Well of course sometimes” snapped Roger “He’s not well though, it’s times like these…” Roger didn’t finish his sentence. “Ok, well when you come down. I will go up.” Roger walked away, but Jim felt uneasy – like he had offended Roger in some way.

He hadn’t meant to make fun of Freddie. It was just well….odd.

When he returned to Freddie’s bedroom he had to double take.

Freddie was still in his bed, but he was sitting bolt upright, and Jim could see a vulnerability in Freddie that literally took his breath away.

He felt as though he was looking into the frightened eyes of a very small child who was reliving a nightmare.

Jim felt completely out of his depth.

He leaned over the banister and called loudly for Roger.

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Jim made his way back into The Market Tavern.

With the drama of the last few hours, Jim could no longer feel the effects of the drinks he’d had at Heaven.

He might as well collect his car keys and drive home.

As he unlocked the bar gate and climbed the steps, Chris cut him off and started shrieking at him.

“I can’t believe they turned down America!”

Jim shook his head. He felt like he had just been slapped, and his ears were still ringing.

“Chris, for God’s sake what the hell are you on about man?” asked Jim.

“Queen! Turning down the opportunity to go to America with Mott! We’ve had celebrities in here tonight mate. My mate Tim is in a band called Humpy Bong. They have been asked to go to America to support Mott the Hoople on tour. They have only been offered the opportunity because Queen turned them down. I always thought Freddie would sell his kidney for a chance like that!” Chris drew breathe.
Jim’s brain began to process this new information.

“Hang on. Hang on. I’ve been with Queen for days, and nobody has mentioned America. Have you got this right Chris?”

“Yes!” Chris was starting to get annoyed with Jim.

“Norman Sheffield was in here with some big wigs from EMI. Apparently it was all agreed with Paul Prenter – who nobody can stand by the way – they shook hands on the deal and everything, and then Sheffield says that when he told Prenter there was no job for him he reneged on the whole deal. Sheffield was furious! He really really wanted Queen.”

“I’m telling you Chris. I know nothing about this.” Jim shook his head wildly. “I don’t think the band do either. I’ve been on tour with them. I’ve slept on the bus, I’ve had meals with them, nobody has mentioned America!”

“Well you need to catch up with Prenter then. I promise you Jim. I swear on my mother’s life. Queen turned down the chance to go to America.”

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The rain was coming down in spades as Jim made his way up the path to the boys’ front door.

Jim turned the collar of his coat up, and rang the bell.

A short while later a sleepy Brian answered the door.

“Jim? What the hell are you doing here? You’ll drown. Come in, come in.”

Jim stepped into the house removing his coat, trying not to drip everywhere.

“I didn’t expect to see you here again this evening. Are you worried about Freddie? He’s fast asleep and has been all evening.”

Jim took a deep breath. “Brian. It gives me no pleasure, but I’ve got it. I’ve got the thing that will rid us of Prenter forever.”
Encounters: Exorcism

Chapter Summary

The boys meet to discuss the depth of Paul Prenter’s treachery. What effect will this have on the future of the band? How will it affect Freddie personally – will he end their relationship?

Chapter Notes

This made me both laugh and cry as I wrote it lovies– perhaps you will too :)

Brian walked through the front door. The rain had not stopped since last night, and his curls were heavy with water.

Three men sat in the living room waiting for him to speak.

“Well. It’s true.” Everyone gasped. “I’ve just been to the phone box and called EMI’s main offices. It took an age to get through to the right person. Trident Studios made the offer to Paul Prenter in the company of an EMI representative on the first night of our tour – in Manchester – shortly after Paul introduced them to Freddie. The offer was for us to go to the USA on a six week tour as Mott’s supporting act. If we were successful, we were also being offered the chance to headline our own tour of the UK next year.”

Deaky’s head was in his hands.

Roger looked like he might punch the wall.

Jim felt terrible for being the person that brought them so much pain.

Freddie hadn’t even been told yet.

It was decided that as he was sleeping late, he would be left to sleep while Brian had got the facts from the horse’s mouth.

The boys would break the news to Freddie as a united front.

As much as Freddie would do anything for Prenter. They were all in agreement that the two things that Freddie could not tolerate were disloyalty, and interference with his creativity.

Paul’s actions would be a hard limit for Freddie.

Brian continued “Seemingly an agreement was made, all representatives shook on the deal, and Prenter reneged when he was told he couldn’t continue to be our manager. He told EMI that he had spoken with us and we had told him that we were not ready.”

“Not ready” shrieked Roger. “We were fucking born ready. Fred’s gonna kill him!”
“Will they reconsider?” asked Deaky quietly. “Now that they know we are interested.”

“I did ask them that John, but they have made an agreement with Humpy Bong. They too are very disappointed that Queen will not be representing them, but they will not be seen to operate a shoddy practice. The offer has been made and accepted. We’re out in the cold.”

The living room door opened slowly and Freddie crept in.

He looked considerably better - although he was still a little pale - his hair was wet from the shower, but he was dressed, and looked ready to face the day.

He sat down quietly on the arm of Jim’s chair.

“Who died?” Freddie asked quietly as though not quite sure his voice would work.

All the anger was sucked from the room by an invisible force, and was replaced by compassion so thick it could have been cut with a knife.

The boys all looked at Freddie, but then couldn’t bear to continue to look at him.

Each of the boys ranged from distrust to outright dislike of Paul Prenter, and they all couldn’t wait to see the back of him, but not one of them wanted to hurt Freddie.

Who would speak?

It couldn’t be Jim, it couldn’t be Deaky, it had to be Roger or Brian.

So who would swing the wrecking ball….his best friend, or the leader of his beloved Queen.

Brian took it upon himself.

“Freddie I’m sorry but we have to tell you something really quite distressing” started Brian.

Freddie nodded to Brian to go ahead.

“There’s no way I can dilute this for you, so…” Brian raised his hands before the bullet was fired “….Paul Prenter has not been honest with you….with us. He has flatly turned down the opportunity for us to tour the USA as Mott the Hoople’s support band. He didn’t discuss it with us first. I’m guessing he didn’t discuss it with you.”

It wasn’t really a question.

“Paul turned the offer down formally on our behalf to both Trident Studios and EMI. He told them that after discussion with us, we had all agreed that we weren’t ready to tour. Paul’s rejection came after he had already accepted the offer, but later found out that he couldn’t continue to manage us. They are less than happy with his business ethics. Paul shook on the deal. Frankly it makes us look incompetent.”

Brian felt it was important to give Freddie as many of the cold hard facts as he could remember while Freddie was looking at him like that.

How he dealt with his personal relationship would be up to Freddie, but Brian could ensure that Freddie had the truth from the business side of the matter.

He could make an informed decision from there.
There was nothing more he could say.

“I’m sorry Freddie.”

Freddie was looking down at his lap chipping at his nails.

It was the most uncomfortable silence that any of them could ever remember enduring, and Jim’s heart was breaking for the happy fun atmosphere that usually hung over the household.

Finally Freddie looked up and met Brian’s eyes. With a small voice he asked “How did you find out?”

“A friend of Jim’s told him last night in the pub. Seemingly his friend’s band is going in our place.”

Freddie jumped up and turned to Jim. His face was red and his fists clenched in rage.

“This was you?” he yelled at Jim.

Freddie turned and marched from the room.

Roger called after him “Jim didn’t mean to hurt you Fred’s. Come on” but the door slammed.

Jim jumped up and ran after Freddie, but Brian blocked the way and shook his head.

“Don’t do it mate. Roger will go shortly. Give him a minute. Fred’s not stupid, but it’s a lot to take in.”

“He’s not well though” Jim wrung his hands in anguish.

“We know, and we can all look after him, but give him time. Freddie is one hell of a business brain Jim, he’ll have a lot of questions shortly, and he’ll deal with this efficiently you’ll see. On an emotional level, he’ll only tell us what he wants us to know, and if you go up there now you’ll fall out – I promise you.”

Jim had never felt more resentful of being employed.

He’d had to leave the boys still working around the kitchen table to work his own shift.

He couldn’t risk missing work again.

Without this job he would have to leave London.

His rent nearly broke him as it was.

Jim was very impressed with the way the band dealt with their business.

All four of them already directors of their own company, and not yet twenty two.

It was obvious they would succeed – to anyone that would give them a chance.

Jim had not mentioned this. They were all so bitterly disappointed about their lost opportunity, it
seemed flippant to mention that other record companies would be mad not to snap them up.

Freddie had not come back downstairs, and Jim was absolutely aching with wanting to see him.

To apologise for being the messenger.

For bringing news that Jim, and Freddie’s closest friends had longed to drop into their laps.

News that would mean that Paul Prenter would be gone from his life, but to stop Paul from hurting Freddie, Jim had to hurt him himself.

Jim had nearly come to blows with Roger. Roger was insistent that they leave Freddie to his own devices, he would come down when he was ready.

Jim couldn’t bear to leave the house without checking Freddie was ok – especially as he was still under doctor’s orders to rest.

Roger had accused Jim of treating Freddie like a child.

Jim hoped that wasn’t how Freddie saw it.

Freddie was young – younger than his years in appearance - with a boyish persona, but Jim had nothing but respect for him – as a man, and as an equal.

So, here he was. Serving beer… and waiting.

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Two hours had passed, though it felt like two weeks when Jim saw the boys head over to a large table in the corner.

They didn’t come to the bar for some time, and Jim was concerned they had fallen out with him.

He decided …or rather he hoped… that wasn’t the case as they could have met at any number of bars in Kensington, but they had chosen The Market Tavern.

They were like four different men.

Gone was the joking, and the camaraderie.

They carried no instruments.

They were here for business and business only.

Jim caught Freddie’s face in profile. He looked very pale, and very tired, but beyond that his face was unreadable.

A mask.

Jim hoped he would never be on the receiving end of that look. There was no sign of heartbreak, not even anger, just a void.

Brian approached the bar first. He spoke more quietly than normal.
“Hey Jim. Can we get some drinks when you get a minute please? We’ll all have a pint, but Fred just wants water.”

“Course. Dare I ask?”

“He’s alright. I don’t think he’s really thought about his relationship with Prenter at all yet – or if he has, he’s not telling us. He’s troubled by the information that Prenter has on the band – future bookings – that sort of thing. Without knowing where we are due to play next we may be letting a lot of people down, and getting that reputation so early on might finish us off before we even get off the ground.”

Jim shook his head. All things he would never have thought of.

“What are the chances of Prenter handing that information over – you know – like a professional?” Jim rolled his eyes.

“Slim. I’m afraid. You know the man Jim. He treats Freddie like a possession. In some ways he knows the power of what he has. He knows that Fred as a performer has the potential to be enormous, he might try to use the bookings to keep Fred hostage.”

Jim sighed “…and Freddie…what are his thoughts?”

“To be honest I don’t know. He asked a lot of questions this afternoon. He was a different man when he came back down, but again - all about the band. I can’t get a measure of how he is feeling. He’s the master of disguise. We’ll only find out what Fred wants us to know. As I said to you weeks ago – Fred isn’t one for relationships – he’s more of a love and leave them kind.” Brian chuckled humourlessly. “I’m kind of surprised he had this one. Makes me worry what Prenter has over him.”

“Hmmmm” Jim looked over at Freddie with concern.

Freddie sat at the table awaiting the inevitable moment that Paul would walk through the door, probably for the last time in his life.

He couldn’t decide if he wanted Paul to arrive early, so he could stop feeling like this. Or if to hope for some miracle that he never arrived at all.

How much easier it would be if this afternoon just didn’t have to happen.

He lowered his throbbing head into his hands, and then quickly pretended to have something in his eye, when he caught Roger looking at him with concern.

He was sick of their pity. All of them. Didn’t they know by now that they had saddled themselves with a complete fucking failure.

That this was the norm for Freddie, and if they were going to feel sorry for him every time something like this happened, they would find themselves emotionally bereft very fucking quickly.

Jim was the worst.

Even now, he was talking to Brian, but not looking at Brian. Freddie could feel Jim’s eyes drilling
into the side of his excruciatingly painful head.

Did he ever express anything but compassion?

Freddie wondered for a moment what it would be like to be a man like Jim. Just….satisfied.

He seemed to have all the time in the world, but never seemed bored.

Pulling pints every day and being well….satisfied.

Being happy to lug someone else’s equipment around the country at short notice.

Giving up the few holiday days he had for someone else to enjoy.

Freddie thought back to the day him and Jim had together in Liverpool.

That was a happy day.

It felt nice that Jim got to do something other than fetch and carry for the band.

See a few of the sights, and actually have the day at leisure.

Freddie had been mortified when Paul had arrived back that day, and started yelling at him.

It was so embarrassing.

Freddie didn’t consider the day wasted – not if Jim got to enjoy a little daylight for a change.

It seemed very little to give for the enormous help he had been.

Freddie wondered what sort of a man Jim would end up with, and nearly laughed out loud despite himself.

He’d be perfect.

A gorgeous little doll with enormous doe eyes.

No wait….a damsel in distress….that Jim could sweep off his feet and fix every tiny problem in his perfect little world.

He would be accomplished in art and music – just like a Victorian maiden.

He would arrange flowers in enormous vases, and drink tea from ornate china cups.

Freddie could feel a nervous giggle coming.

He thought again of Paul – did he love him? He wasn’t really sure.

He loved the way he felt when Paul looked at him across a crowded dance floor.

What it was like when Paul introduced him to important people as his man.

When Paul looked so proud when Freddie would head outside with a man of Paul’s choosing.

He really liked that feeling. Of having attention showered upon him. Of being important to someone.

He didn’t like the way he felt in a morning lately. How heavy headed and queasy he was feeling.
How he always seemed to wake up alone, and by the end of the day was threatened with being taken to the hospital because he was always so ill.

He could never place the events that led him to these moments. The memories were fuzzy.

He hated hospitals, and he hated doctors.

His stomach turned over when the smell of his school infirmary came to mind.

It was real for a moment.

He was back there.

Alone, and just waiting for the next examination after one kind of fight….or another.

The room span before him and he clamped a hand over his mouth when he thought he would vomit.

“Are you alright Fred?” he felt Brian’s hand on his shoulder grounding his back in the room.

He gulped down the iced water gratefully and nodded. He sucked hard on an ice cube.

That really helped.

He was back in the room, a little cold, but it kept him alert.

He wondered how Jim’s imaginary man would react in these circumstances.

Freddie bet he wouldn’t need the toilet every fifteen minutes.

Paul walked in….that would have to wait.

Jim clocked Prenter as soon as he walked into the bar.

Jim wasn’t sure if it was the way Prenter was dressed that got his back up, or the way he appeared to slither across the floor.

Prenter gestured to the band, asking if they would like a drink. Brian shook his head on behalf of them all.

When Prenter headed for the bar, Jim stuck his head around the door and asked Chris if he could serve him.

Chris was struggling with some enormous boxes of crisps that had just been delivered, and seemed a little inconvenienced.

“Chris, I’m sorry mate, but you either serve him, or I knock him out, you choose which is the least disruptive to your day.”

Chris straightened up “That’s not like you Jim. I always thought you were one of those people that could get along with Hitler, as long as he didn’t mention the war.”
“Believe me Chris, I’ve given this guy more of my time than he’s due.”

Chris raised his eyebrows, but went out to the bar.

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About half an hour later Brian, Roger and Deaky pulled up stools at the bar.

The deed was done.

“To be fair, we had very little to say to the man” said Brian.

“I was just watching his teeth as he spoke” added Roger. “I was dreaming about knocking the fuckers out.”

“You did very well Rog” Deaky patted his back.

“So……?” Jim’s eyebrows were raised in anticipation.

“He didn’t deny it. Said he was doing what he thought was right for the band. To which Freddie asked him if he had so little faith in his own project that he genuinely believed we weren’t ready. He couldn’t answer that, and I don’t think he ever thought Fred would challenge him like that.”

“So, what happens now?” inquired Jim.

“The slimy fucker tried to wheedle his way out of it, but I have to say Fred stood strong” said Roger. “I’m so proud of him. He doesn’t even waver. I’ve never seen him tremble in a business situation. Oh” he laughed “unless you count that interview in Liverpool. That scared the shit out of him.”

Jim could see Freddie and Prenter talking out of the corner of his eye.

He couldn’t hear what was being said, but from their body language he could tell things were getting heated.

“Shall we go over?” asked Jim.

“No!” said Roger firmly. “Freddie asked us for a little privacy. He’s gonna dump Paul. I can’t believe Fred actually feels bad about it.”

“He hates ending relationships. When you get to know Fred a bit better you’ll realise that no one ever gets away from him. Once you’re Fred’s friend, he sort of …keeps you, it’s like you don’t ever think about leaving. It’s hard to describe” stammered Deaky “it’s …a bit….supernatural.”

“He sees the best in everyone. It’s like appalling behaviour is an off day to Freddie. As though everyone is a good person underneath, they just …fuck up from time to time. No one is ever unworthy of his time. You can be an arse hole to him, and he’ll find a way to excuse it” added Brian.

Jim could see Paul trying to wrap his arms around Freddie, and Freddie trying to pull away from him.
“Guys, are you sure we shouldn’t head over there? I’ll be discreet. I’ll make him tea, and take it over…”

“Jim, you’re doing it again” snapped Roger. “Stop trying to parent him! We arranged the venue. It’s public. It’s the middle of the day. There are people around. Paul is not going to try anything. Freddie can fight his own battles. He was doing it long before you came on the scene.”

“Will you two stop griping at each other” snapped Brian. “You’re doing my head in. It’s been a long day. Can we just go home?”

Brian stood to leave in a rare show of bossiness, waving his hand at Roger and Deaky to get off their seats.

He turned to Jim “Tell Fred to come home when he’s done. He needs to go back to bed, or we’ll have Doctor Atkinson threatening us with the law again.” Brian rolled his eyes. “You come back too Jim when you’ve finished your shift. We’ll be talking business, but you’re welcome.”

Brian gestured to the others. “Come on, out!”

As soon as the boys had left, Jim put the kettle on and prepared tea for Freddie.

Since he had found it, Jim always kept the china cup and saucer to one side in the cupboard especially for him.

Things appeared to have cooled a little as Freddie and Prenter were sat talking. Jim could read their body language though, and Freddie looked poised to flee.

Jim approached with a tray.

He’d found some shortbread in the kitchen too. He didn’t know who it belonged to, but he had put some on the saucer for Freddie. Poor thing needed an enormous pick me up, but the biscuit would have to do.

Jim didn’t say a word when he put the tray on the table in front of Freddie, but he did manage to quickly catch his hand and give it a squeeze before he left the table.

Jim hadn’t even got back behind the bar when he heard the ruckus.

He popped the bar gate shut then turned to see Freddie hurl the scalding contents of the cup at Prenter.

“Get out of my life” he screamed.

Everyone turned to watch the events unfolding, as Freddie ran from the bar.

Prenter looked more concerned about his suit.

Jim couldn’t follow Freddie. He couldn’t leave his post.

He hoped that whatever the cause of Freddie’s outburst was the final straw that had just severed the
tether between the two men, and that Freddie would run home to the family he had chosen for himself.

Jim didn’t know what would happen now.

How much Freddie would confide in them – Roger perhaps.

What would happen in terms of their career?

He did know that if Freddie was physically at home then he wouldn’t be in danger the way he had been the last few weeks, and that gave Jim a little relief.

Jim hoped that Freddie would go home, and not to a seedy bar to drown his sorrows and make himself feel better – temporarily.

“Wonder what that was about?” asked a lady who stood before him. Her husband following her to the bar.

Jim shrugged. It wasn’t his story to tell.

He served the couple, then gave the bar a quick wipe. It was unusually quiet this afternoon. Chris has gone out to get some decent coffee.

Jim raised his eyes to see Prenter standing there.

The man had some audacity.

Paul pointed to his shirt “I don’t suppose you’ve got anything I can clean up with mate?”

Mate? Mate?? The man had the hide of a rhinoceros!

Jim raised his eyebrows and unlocked the bar gate “Step this way.”

Jim ushered Prenter outside into the yard behind the pub.

“I suppose you know all about what has just taken place, seeing as they tell their little pet everything?” Paul inquired.

Jim remained silent.

Paul turned to face him. Jim was glad he had, he wouldn’t strike a man with his back turned.

Jim swung his fist hard into Paul’s face knocking him to the ground in one blow.

“I couldn’t do that before, but now that Freddie has told you, I’m telling you, I don’t want to see you so much as glance in his direction. Do you hear me?”

Paul smirked and tried to stand.

Jim hadn’t heard a yes.

He kicked Prenter hard in the ribs knocking him back to the ground.

Jim didn’t enjoy the violence that came with his job, but he could tolerate watching the man he loved abused for his beautiful body and soul far less.

Jim continued to kick until Prenter pleaded with him to stop.
Jim watched him slither up the pathway and out onto the street.
Chapter Summary

Our boys assess the damage and formulate a plan for world domination - post-Prenter. Jim snatches a little time alone with Freddie….will he take his chance?

Chapter Notes

This chapter gets nasty at the end loves. I am sorry. Please take care when reading, and stop if you feel uncomfortable.

Jim did not visit the boys that evening, despite being invited.

He sat at home reading the paper, with a pack of frozen peas on his bruised and bloodied knuckles.

His knuckles would have given him away.

Even if Freddie didn’t guess, Roger would know that Jim couldn’t resist the opportunity presented to him.

Roger would have taken it himself.

Jim thought about his relationship with Roger.

It was turbulent to say the least, to the point that Brian had noticed their continuous digs at one another.

Jim liked Roger a lot. He was funny and lively, and a fierce friend.

Jim wondered why they kept bumping heads.

He knew the answer had to be Freddie.

Was Roger jealous of the growing relationship between him and Freddie?

Was Roger resentful that Jim took charge every time Freddie was in trouble?

Jim hoped not.

Jim wanted a loving relationship with Freddie, but he also wanted a lasting friendship with Roger.

Roger was great for Freddie. A buddy. A wing man. A partner in crime.

Roger brought fun and levity to Freddie’s artistic soul.

Jim wondered if Freddie needed someone with a different perspective on life too.
A little more mature, with a calmer approach.

Jim had not forgotten the day he had spent with Freddie in Liverpool.

How Freddie had laid with his head in Jim’s lap for an hour, maybe two.

Jim also thought about the way Freddie behaved when he was with Prenter.

He was certainly reactive. A soul blowing wildly in whichever direction the breeze took it.

Most souls had an axis, a base around which they rotated. Where was Freddie’s?

************************

Jim made his way up the path to the boys’ front door the following morning.

The rain had finally subsided, and the sun was shining. The morning was crisp and bright, promising better things. New beginnings.

Jim hoped that Freddie could forgive him.

Brian admitted Jim into the house with a broad smile.

The kettle was always on, and it never failed to surprise Jim how homely a building could be that housed four male rock stars…not to mention tidy.

Jim had to stifle a laugh when he saw an enormous vase of flowers coming down the hallway.

“They aren’t right” Freddie pouted.

Jim took the vase from him before it toppled.

“Where is this going?” he asked with a chuckle.

“On the top of my piano please…use a coaster!” Freddie smiled warmly, but it didn’t quite meet his eyes.

In spite of the events of the last few days, it was clear that Freddie was feeling better. Although he looked like he had missed about a month’s sleep, and the doctor would not miss that.

As though summoned, the doctor appeared at the door.

“Excuse me, I did knock” said Doctor Atkinson politely.

“Come in Doctor” said Brian trying to open the door wide enough to allow the doctor in. There were four pairs of wet boots stuffed behind it from the previous day’s rain.

Jim resisted the urge to laugh. He had better hide his own bruised knuckles. The man had x ray vision.

“How is the patient today?” asked the doctor with a slightly less accusatory tone.

He made for the bottom of the stairs, but Freddie called out from the living room “In here Doctor.”
Freddie was seated at the piano fiddling with the flowers. He clearly was not happy with the arrangement.

“How are you feeling Freddie?” asked the doctor.

“Perfect Sir” said Freddie, his voice now ringing out clearly.

“Hmmmm…I don’t believe you” said the doctor, feeling Freddie’s throat.

Freddie was fidgeting as the doctor prodded and poked him, continuing to arrange the flowers.

Jim wondered what he was distracting himself from.

“How any coughing, sneezing, vomiting?” Freddie shook his head, and winced. “My head still hurts a bit” he was forced to admit.

“They call that a hangover young man” said the doctor firmly.

Freddie giggled.

“I agree that you are much better Freddie, but you look very tired. You need to make sure you get plenty of rest.”

“I am tired doctor, I’ve just had my heart broken” Freddie said flippantly.

Nobody laughed.

The doctor left satisfied that Freddie was recovering, but stressed to the group that he was desperately in need of some rest.

******************************

After a fresh round of coffee. The conversation turned to the inevitable – their future.

“We need to think bigger. We need to think like Paul. We need to get the good venues” stated Brian, emphasising his point with his hands.

“Sorry…” said Jim cautiously. “I know I don’t usually like to get involved in these matters, but as an outsider, I’d like to point out that when I met you, you were all fresh, excited and thrilling to watch. I know Prenter’s contacts raised your hopes, but I think the key point here is that you’ve just had your confidence knocked – not your talent.”

“And I fucked it up” said Freddie eyes cast down at the floor.

“No, Fred you can’t think like that!” stressed Roger. “Prenter treated you the worst out of all of us.” Roger got up to hug Freddie, but he didn’t hug back.

Freddie sat quiet for a moment. “Brian is right. We need to think bigger. We need to get those things for ourselves. We need to play the big venues. Get noticed. Maybe EMI will pick us up for a different project, our own tour. They wanted us right….not Paul? We played those venues, we got the tour offer – not Paul.”
Everyone nodded. Freddie was right.

Brian turned to Deaky “What’s the budget looking like Deaks?”

“Hmmm.” Deaky frowned. “I’d like to say good after ticket sales, but Prenter cost us a fortune in
getting the road team and the lighting rigs. We’re going to have to do as much of this as we can
ourselves.”

They were all pensive for a few moments.

“What about our album?” asked Brian. “I know we’ve had to take crappy hours at the studio and
fund a lot of it ourselves, but we must have more than enough material. An album in the shops will
make a huge difference.”

Freddie point a finger at Brian, deep in thought. “It’s promotional assistance we need” murmured
Freddie. “We need to get the word out that we have an album.”

“Well if it helps, give me some dates I’ll get you booked in at the Tavern” offered Jim. “I know it’s
not much, but at least people will see you.”

All the time Jim had been speaking, Freddie hadn’t taken his eyes off Jim’s knuckles.

Jim couldn’t read what Freddie was thinking.

For the first time, he was glad.

“Thank you Jim…and we do appreciate it…but we need to think bigger.” Freddie was still deep
inside his own head.

“We need to play the colleges” suggested Roger. “There’s where the disposable income is. Students
buy tickets.”

“Mmmm” Brian nodded. “I’ll put up some notices at the Imperial. We’ll leave ourselves free for the
big weekend nights, but maybe we could do some Thursday evenings? It can’t hurt.”

“We need to auction ourselves off” murmured Freddie. “To the highest bidder.”

“Sorry?” said Deaky.

Freddie dismissed it with a wave, and said with a bolder voice “I need to think about that some more.
So, the album” he clapped his hands “what’s left to do?”

“Not much really.” said Brian. “Your vocals are down.”

Freddie rolled his eyes “My God, do you remember that all-nighter we pulled dear?”

Roger groaned loudly.

“Thank God for the knocking shop over the road. There were a few sights there to keep my eyes
open.” They all laughed.

“So, Rog and I need to do some work on the instrumentals. Oh Deaky….Liar” Brian said clicking
his fingers.

“Me?” he stammered. “I haven’t lied about anything.”
They all laughed again, and Jim could feel the tension in the room dissolving.

“No! You need to finish the bass solo on Liar.”

Deaky blushed pink. “Oh yeah.”

Roger turned to Freddie “How come you always get finished first?”

“Because I’m the most important darling” Freddie gave Roger a hug.

“I do need to finish the graphics though – for the cover. I’ve nearly finished the Queen emblem. It’s going to be fantastic. You’ll see.”

Freddie slumped further down on the piano stool. He looked exhausted.

Jim looked over with concern “You’re gonna fall off that stool in a minute.”

“Ok” Brian clapped his hands loudly.

“Jim, what are you doing today?”

Jim shrugged his shoulders “I’m at a loose end to be honest mate. It’s my day off. What can I do?”

“Do you want to Freddie sit? Give him the opportunity to have a few hours rest, then finish the album sleeve?”

Did he want to Freddie sit?!

Freddie grinned brightly, the humour not lost on him.

He rushed over and threw himself onto Jim’s lap, swinging his feet in the air, his arms locked around Jim’s neck, fluttering his eyelashes he said “Daddy If I sit on your lap will you read me a story?”

Jim flushed scarlet.

If Freddie sat in his lap he’d give him something – but it wouldn’t be a story.

The room rang with laughter, all the boys painfully aware of Jim’s predicament –obvious to everyone but Freddie.

Jim was just happy to hear Freddie laugh.

In response Jim wrapped his arms around Freddie and started to bounce him on his knee like a child “I’d be happy to Freddie sit, but I don’t know how much rest I can enforce, he seems to have me wrapped around his little finger.”

There was a fresh burst of laughter.

“As he does all of us my friend” said Deaky. “As he does us all.”

“Right….Roger and I will head over to the studio.” said Brian. “We’ll pop round to Roy’s and see if he’s free. It might be a long wait if the studio is taken, but Roy might get us in a bit sooner. Deaky you get your bass and meet us there. Fred you get some sleep, then finish the artwork for the sleeve. Jim you’re welcome to a cold shower” he winked “then bring Freddie over to the studio when he’s ready.”
Freddie looked at Jim, very confused.

“We can get this album sorted ….then we just need someone to pull it all together and get the word out.”

Freddie jumped off Jim’s lap, and they all rushed into a group hug.

Jim had never seen anything like it.

He hoped Freddie would use a phoenix in the band emblem.

Queen had risen from the ashes.

****************************

When the rest of the band had left, Freddie rushed up the stairs.

Jim called up after him “Are you going to sleep for a bit? Would you like some tea?”

Freddie popped his head over the banister “No!” he said, as though Jim had suggested he give up sex for a year…well …a week.

Jim had made fresh tea, and had just got comfortable in his chair in the living room when Freddie rushed in like a hurricane.

He was carrying a number of notebooks, a handful of pencils and his blanket.

He squeezed into the chair next to Jim – which was really only made for one person – and slung his legs over Jim’s lap.

He shook out his blanket, which was also much too large for the area, and covered both of their legs.

He balanced his notebook on his knees, and without a word began to draw.

Jim was very amused, but he didn’t really know what to say.

There was certainly nothing he could do – he couldn’t move.

A few moments passed with Freddie totally absorbed in his drawing.

He pushed his pencil behind his ear and began shuffling around for a different one.

Suddenly he glanced up as though aware that he wasn’t alone. “Could you pass my tea please?”

Jim threw his head back and laughed.

“What did your last servant die of?”

Freddie starred openly at Jim without a hint of humour.

Jim began to feel like the joke was on him.

Freddie looked down at his lap. “My family’s servant lived with us for years. Since I was a baby, but
I don’t even know if she is alive now. When the war broke out, she didn’t live with us anymore.”

Jim clasped a hand over his mouth.

The realisation that he knew absolutely nothing about Freddie’s life was too keen in that moment. Somehow with his big mouth he had managed to blunder in again. War? What war? Servants?!

Freddie nudged him and smiled “I know you didn’t mean it like that” he giggled.

It was like Jim had just dreamt that Freddie was sad.

*****************************************************************************

It was dusk when Jim awoke.

He first became aware of the ticking of the clock in the hallway, and then soft snores beside him.

He couldn’t feel his legs or his bottom, and he didn’t think he could move his neck.

He slowly started to rotate his shoulders until he could sit up a little further.

Freddie had finished the graphics, and they were something else.

The detail was profound. The use of light and shade to illustrate the sections Freddie wanted to be seen, and those that were softer.

Not dissimilar to the man himself.

Jim carefully wrapped his arm under Freddie’s legs trying to shuffle him around, without waking him. He needed to get some feeling back in his own legs.

“I’m awake” Freddie said softly, although his eyes were closed and Jim could swear he could hear little snores.

Jim softly stamped his feet until the feeling started to return, followed by pins and needles.

He discreetly clenched and released the muscles in his legs, trying not to disturb Freddie any more than he already had.

He could have got up. Gone to the toilet and made fresh tea, but it was too tempting.

Too tempting not to carefully brush the hair away from Freddie’s eye.

Not to brush his thumb over Freddie’s cheekbone.

Not to carefully kiss the tip of his nose.

“I know what you’re doing” Freddie said softly, his eyes still closed.

“You’re not stopping me” whispered Jim with a smile.

Freddie smiled “I like it.”
Jim deliberated for what felt like hours.

Should he just kiss him?

Freddie was not stopping him, but then what was he not stopping him from doing?

Jim was struck again by how childlike Freddie was.

An adult crawling into another man’s lap, to draw, and then fall asleep.

How he liked soft caresses with no call for them to deepen, or become sexual.

Jim’s mind flashed back to when his sister was very small.

Every evening after tea she would crawl onto their father’s lap to watch TV until bedtime.

Dad would rub little circles on her tummy, and stroke her hair.

It should feel weird thinking about his sister in the same context as what he was doing with Freddie right now, but it wasn’t at all.

To borrow one of Roger’s phrases – it was just Freddie.

Something unique about him, that was enchanting, sweet, enticing.

Jim brushed his thumb softly over Freddie’s bottom lip.

Freddie jumped awake, and started to bite at his lip giggling “That tickles!”

At that moment the door burst open and Roger rushed in, followed behind by Brian and Deaky.

“No, it’s in darkness. They must be on their way to the studio” Roger shouted putting on the light.

Freddie and Jim both yelped as they were blinded by the sudden light. “Owww Roger” yelled Freddie “what did you do that for?”

“They’re here Brian.” Roger was laughing “Canoodling in the dark. Couple more minutes and they would have been at it.” Roger stuck out his tongue.

Jim was glad of the blinding light.

Perhaps no one could see him blush.

He started to wonder about fate. Could it possibly be against him?

Every time he got close to Freddie, something cruelly snatched him away.

Jim’s eyes started to adjust to the light when he saw Brian pop into the room.

Brian’s eyebrows were flickering up into his hairline, and he was quickly nodding.

Jim shook his head.

No.

With sadness and regret - Freddie was not his.
Freddie was suddenly awake and all smiles wanting to know every little detail about their studio time, and the album.

“It’s done Fred.” said Roger with confidence.

“Done? What do you mean it’s done?” asked Freddie perplexed.

“Roy introduced us to this really great guy called Sean. He runs the latest releases from record companies to the shops, radio stations, and clubs. He’s a whizz with the tech. He’s better than Roy, and even Roy admits that. You should hear Seven Seas now Fred. I can already hear us on Top of the Pops. It’s amazing!”

Freddie squealed and clapped his hands together.

“We waited for you” continued Roger. “Roy’s waiting for the artwork now. Why don’t you pop down now Fred? I’m sure he’ll still be there. You’ll get the opportunity to listen to it.”

“I can’t go on my own” Freddie pouted.

Roger winked at Jim “I’m sure your beloved will take you in the car.”

Freddie didn’t shut up talking all the way to the studio.

Jim couldn’t believe Freddie was the same sad little person who had fired their manager, and dumped his boyfriend yesterday. Or in fact, the same person that Jim had resuscitated the night before.

It was a charm to hear.

Freddie was so elated by how quickly the album had come together.

He knew it would be easy, he told Jim, as though it had all been his idea. They had spent so long having snippets of time in the studio that they hadn’t even noticed that the finished product just needed pulling together.

He was beginning to have doubts about his artwork, and Jim had to talk him out of destroying it on the way, by calmly suggesting that he let Roy and Sean take a look, and see if they had any thoughts on how to improve it.

Jim hadn’t even met the men, but he know the artwork was absolutely perfect, and would blow them away, as it had him.

If anything needed work it was Freddie’s confidence.

Freddie became much more subdued when they pulled into the car park.

It had suddenly occurred to him that he didn’t know Sean, and he would have to introduce himself.

“Come with me” Freddie pleaded with Jim in a small voice.

“I was just gonna wait out here Freddie, have a cigarette, what do I know about albums?” Jim
chuckled, feeling a little intimidated himself.

He wasn’t an artist, and he didn’t mix in those circles.

“Please?” Freddie was giving him those eyes again, and he was lost.

“Ok, OK, I’ll come.” Jim relented.

“Yayy” Freddie clapped his hands, and grabbed Jim’s hand as they walked towards the studio.

It was funny. Jim would not feel comfortable holding hands in public with any other man than Freddie.

The studio was in darkness when Freddie and Jim entered.

“Hello” called Freddie.

He saw a crack of light at the end of the corridor, and a head popped round the door.

“Are you…Sean?” asked Freddie shyly.

The man came out of the room, and shook Freddie and Jim’s hands warmly. “Freddie Mercury. I would recognise you anywhere. Big fan.”

Freddie blushed.

“It’s all about ready. We didn’t think you would be coming tonight, sorry Roy’s left for the evening. You’re welcome to come and listen to it though. We’ve managed to tease out some amazing harmonies.” said Sean.

Freddie and Jim turned to each other, nodding with excitement.

Sean played snippets of each track, with Freddie asking to hear specific parts that interested him the most.

Jim was fascinated by watching Freddie work.

The shy man had gone.

He was demanding.

Asking for certain parts to be repeated again and again, and how the effects had been achieved.

Jim also watched Sean.

Freddie’s charms had not gone unnoticed by him either, and Sean’s indiscreet glimpses at Freddie’s arse were amusing - if a little predatory.

Sean asked to see Freddie’s artwork, and the shy man returned.

Pulling his notebook out of his pocket, Freddie was quick to point out the parts of his work that he
thought were not quite right, rather than the good parts.

Sean gushed over the emblem, and Jim was thrilled for Freddie.

Jim could see that the validation given freely by the older man was good for him.

Jim could feel himself stiffening up after sitting for so long, and having Freddie on his lap all afternoon. He desperately needed a cigarette.

“Freddie, I don’t mean to be rude” he said “but are you going to be much longer? I’ve left my cigarettes in the car. I’m going to go out and have one. Shall I come back, or shall I wait outside for you?” Jim asked.

Freddie looked at his watch “I’m so sorry darling, time’s gotten away from me. Erm…” Freddie turned to Sean “are we about done?”

“Yeah” Sean nodded enthusiastically. “Shall I get you a copy to take home? Obviously the artwork won’t be on it, but I’ll get that sorted, and in a few days I’ll start distributing the album to shops and the stations. See if we can’t get you on The Old Grey Whistle Test.”

Freddie leapt up and gave Sean a huge hug, and then turned to Jim and hugged him too.

“Jim, go have your cigarette. I’ll be down in ten minutes” said Freddie.

***************************

Freddie drummed his fingers on the mixing desk, and couldn’t keep his knees still.

It was happening.

It was actually happening.

Queen would have an album in the shops.

People would be able to buy their music, and listen to it in their homes.

Just yesterday he thought his entire world was falling apart.

That the band would fail.

He didn’t even have a back up plan.

He would have to serve chips in a café somewhere.

Sean seemed to be taking his time.

Freddie never could sit still.

He noticed the evening paper, and pulled it towards himself.

He didn’t like to read the paper, but he couldn’t sit in silence.

He wished he had told Jim to come back up.
When he turned over the first page, his heart stopped.

There was a lurid photograph of himself on the front wearing a very tight fitting stage costume, that somehow looked outlandish and grotesque.

He didn’t look like himself at all, and he didn’t like that look.

Freddie looked at his face in the photograph.

His stage make up looked exaggerated.

He looked very drunk…or perhaps even drugged.

Freddie remembered that outfit, it was the night he had first tried the coke.

The article was entitled ‘All the King’s men.’ Paul Prenter had been credited with providing the exposé.

The article went on to say that Freddie was a raging homosexual, that he would have sex with anyone, and had even been aware that men were paying for sexual acts with him.

He was a drug addict, and regularly supplied to younger men.

Prenter also went on to describe aspects of Freddie’s personality that hurt him more than all of it.

How he was frightened to be alone, and how his quest for affection was infantile and boundless.

The tears rolled down Freddie’s cheeks.

This was a local evening newspaper. Everyone in London would read it.

His Mother, his Father, his sister. Their Temple.

He couldn’t go home.

He couldn’t face Jim.

He couldn’t go on living.

Freddie heard a noise in the hallway.

He quickly wiped his face, and pushed away the paper.

When no one came into the room after a few moments, he turned to face the door.

Sean was standing in the doorway.

The expression on his face was that of a lion waiting to pounce. Ready to capture his prey.

He smiled and entered the room closing the door behind him.

“I wondered about that” Sean pointed to the paper.

“I wondered if any of it was true? What it would cost to get Freddie Mercury into bed?”

Sean was leering at Freddie.
He reached up to touch Freddie’s shoulder, pulling the sleeve of his jacket down Freddie’s arm.

Freddie couldn’t meet his eyes.

“How much do you think it would cost to get this album distributed do you think? Two days, you could be a household name. Your friends are very excited.”

Sean was leaning over him now. Breathing heavily into his ear.

“So….what I want to know is….what would you give to not let them down?”

Freddie was terrified.

He could hear his own heartbeat.

He was frozen to the spot.

His legs wouldn’t move.

He wanted to cry out for Jim, but he wouldn’t hear him from here.

He could fight Sean.

He could give him a bloody nose like the men at The Market Tavern.

Then he saw their faces – Brian, Roger and Deaky – their disappointment, their pity, their anger, when their efforts were thwarted again because of Freddie.

He saw Paul’s face.

His sarcastic smile.

The things he had said to him just yesterday.

It was all his fault.

If he wasn’t so needy and pathetic.

It was all his fault.

He couldn’t disappoint them again.

He thought of how much less Sean would hurt him, if he thought he was willing.

He turned to Sean with a big showman smile and took his hand “Whatever you want darling. Whatever you need.”
Encounters: The Dark

Chapter Summary

Jim drives Freddie home after Queen’s first ever album is successfully produced. Something is wrong – why isn’t he excited? Meanwhile Freddie sinks into his own internal hell.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is particularly dark lovelies. Please read with care. Also, I am new to this so if you feel I am not tagging correctly, please do shout.

On a dull note, I’m going to be away on business for the rest of the week so won’t be able to update for a few days – sorry 😞 I’m sure my note taking won’t just be business related as I don’t seem to be able to stop writing!! :) As always your feedback is so important to me so please do leave me a note.

Jim stubbed out his third cigarette, and made his way towards the building.

Freddie had been an age!

Jim smiled to himself as he thought about how excited Freddie would be to take home their very first album.

Jim would go in and get him, he would be there all night if left to his own devices.

Just as he made that decision, the door swung back and Freddie ran through it as though the devil was chasing him.

He was flushed and flustered, and not his usual regal self at all.

Jim laughed out loud.

Success suited him.

Freddie noticed Jim, and raised the album into the air with a fist pump “Yeah!” he shouted.

Jim ran to Freddie and pulled him into a bear hug. For a second he felt a little resistance from Freddie so eased off a little, but figured it must have been in his imagination when Freddie flung his arms around Jim’s neck.

A second later he allowed himself to be swung into the air.

Jim saw Sean in the upstairs window, and gave him a wave.

“Your first album - how does it feel?”
Freddie smiled broadly “Magnificent darling!”

The drive home was different to the drive to the studio.
Freddie was unusually quiet and subdued.
Jim cast a glance at Freddie out the corner of his eye.
He was staring out of the window as though seeing something else.
He must be exhausted thought Jim.
The whirlwind events of the last few days catching up.
He was still technically unwell, as well as having to cope with the full spectre that was Paul Prenter, and then the emotional high of rushing through their first album effectively - today.
Yes, a lot had happened in three days.
Jim smiled softly at Freddie cuddling the album close to him chest.
Jim cast his mind back to the night he had driven Freddie home after the fight at the Market Tavern.
He has been chatty and friendly and animated that night – despite his recent ordeal.
Giggling over the silliest things.
This felt different.
Was something wrong?
Jim wracked his brain to think of anything silly he might have said to offend Freddie. Despite his outer shell, Freddie could be very sensitive.
“You’re quiet sweetheart. Is everything OK?” Jim had to try. He knew that if Freddie’s world had just collapsed, he wouldn’t share his grief.
There was silence.
Freddie didn’t speak at all.
He continued to stare out of the window.
Jim turned his attention back to the steering wheel.
Minutes passed.
This was actually uncomfortable.
It might have been one minute - it might have been twenty.
Then he spoke.

“Jim.”

“Yes honey?”

Silence.

A little more insistent “Jim!”

Jim turned towards Freddie. He was staring back at him in absolute terror.

His eyes were wide as though seeing the most heinous acts of humanity unfolding before him.

His mouth dropped open.

Although not at all spiritual, Jim felt the atmosphere in the car turn to ice.

Freddie’s corresponding shivers meant he felt it too.

Jim pulled the car over immediately.

He had never felt such a sense of urgency, but for what he did not know.

He ran around the car and flung open Freddie’s door.

It was like breaking a spell.

Freddie collapsed into his arms, sobbing loudly onto his shoulder.

His body wracked with violent shivers.

Jim held him tightly as though trying to hold the splintering pieces of him together.

His first aid training ran through his mind, but told him that nothing in the hand book had prepared him for this.

This was emotional. It had to be.

Jim was far out of his depth.

Suddenly Freddie violently pushed Jim away and vomited onto the ground.

Jim snapped out of his astonishment into action. He held Freddie’s hair, and rubbed comforting circles into his back until the retching stopped.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry” Freddie was muttering over and over again as Jim rocked him to his chest.

Jim didn’t speak.

There was nothing he could say.

Eventually Freddie began to calm.

His sobs became intermittent gasps, and despite violent shudders he was beginning to feel limp in Jim’s arms.
Jim continued to stroke his back rhythmically, and tucked his fingers in Freddie’s hair, holding his head close to his shoulder a little longer.

This was Freddie’s time.

To feel safe. To recover.

“I’m sorry” he said a little bolder. “It’s alright. You go. I can walk home from here.”

Jim shook his head. “I think we can do a little better than that honey. Come on. I don’t want us to talk here. I want you to be comfortable. We’re about five minutes from my house. Is it alright if I take you there? I’ll take you home when you’ve had some rest.”

Freddie nodded quickly. “If you can stand to be around me.”

With a finger under his chin, Jim forced Freddie to look into his eyes “You’re being silly.”

Jim felt terrible letting him go.

He wasn’t convinced that Freddie wouldn’t fall apart again the minute he was out of hold, but he had to drive them home.

He wanted Freddie to feel safe.

That he could consider Jim’s home his own. A safe haven.

Freddie’s life was a carnival. Four men in a house, recording studios, managers, agents, production companies, media.

He wanted Freddie to hear the silences between the thoughts.

Even if he couldn’t bring himself to utter words.

Even if Jim never found out the reason for his crumbling.

***********************

Jim unlocked the door and with one arm around him ushered Freddie indoors.

Freddie stood in the doorway dwarfed in Jim’s enormous coat.

He looked around him as though seeing artwork where there was blank walls….perhaps he was.

Freddie snapped back into room when he felt gentle fingers on the back of his neck leading him in.

Jim turned up the thermostat on the wall, and showed Freddie into a large bright kitchen.

The tiles were black and white - harlequin - making the room look very striking. It might have looked cavernous if not for the bold pattern.

Jim pulled out a chair for Freddie as he put the kettle on, and took two mugs out of the cupboard.

“I’m sorry darling, but I only have regular tea.” said Jim “I’ll get you some Earl Grey when I next go
shopping.”

Freddie nodded his thanks.

While waiting for the kettle to boil, Jim crouched in front of Freddie and gently touched his fingers which were linked together in his lap.

“What do you need?” asked Jim softly.

“It’s gone too far” muttered Freddie “It always goes too far.”

Jim was puzzled, but he didn’t want to push.

“What’s gone too far honey?” He waited for Freddie to speak.

Freddie bowed his head, and his hair covered his face.

“I just want to make music.” His voice was barely audible.

Jim stood when the kettle boiled. He poured water into both cups and popped one down on the table for Freddie.

Freddie immediately picked up the mug wrapping both hands around it, but it was too hot. He dropped it down on the table quickly and clenching his hands together shivering.

“What can I do?” asked Jim feeling helpless. “Right now, what will make it better?”

He pulled his coat a little tighter around Freddie, and put the back of his hand to his forehead.

No temperature.

“Are you in pain? I can give you some painkillers?” Freddie shook his head.

“Would you like a shower?”

Freddie nodded vigorously.

Affirmative.

Something solid that Freddie knew he wanted.

“Come on darling. I’ll show you where everything is.”

********************************************

Jim was in the living room when Freddie finally came downstairs.

Jim had closed the curtains and lit a number of taper candles. He had also lit a fire. If the situation wasn’t what it was, it could have been mistaken for a romantic ambience.

Freddie looked tiny in one of Jim’s large jumpers, as the sleeves completely covered his hands.

His hair was still dripping from the shower, and in an odd way Jim was reminded of the first time he
met Freddie. He really did look like Aladdin.

Jim had stacked some cushions on the floor to sit on next to the sofa, but he had made the sofa comfortable for Freddie.

“Come and sit down darling” Jim said softly.

Freddie didn’t say anything, but he didn’t argue either.

He meekly walked into the living room and sat on the edge of the sofa.

Jim had brought his woollen blanket down from his bedroom.

The one he had wrapped Freddie in the night Jim Connors had drugged him.

Whenever Jim had seen Freddie relaxing, he always had his brightly coloured blanket.

It wasn’t the same, but it might help.

Jim plumped up the pillows “Lie down just relax. Take some nice deep breaths.”

For the first time in his life, Freddie did what he was told.

They must have laid like that for half an hour.

Freddie just breathing.

Jim lay beside him, propped on his elbow, his hand held out for Freddie to cling on to.

“You don’t have to say anything honey, but I think you might find it helps if you do? Just start anywhere. Blurt out the first thing that comes to mind” coaxed Jim.

Silence. Then softly.

“It’s out of control.” He whispered getting teary again.

“What is honey?”

“All of it. The album. The agents. The lawmen. The press. Just….just….the men. They always want more of me than I am willing to give them.”

This was promising. Freddie was at least talking.

“Have you spoken to Brian?” Jim asked softly. “I’m sure if Brian knew how you were feeling, he would take some of the responsibility off you.”

He allowed himself a quick tickle of Freddie’s tummy.

“Brian always knows what to say hey?!”

No giggles, just sniffles.

“I don’t think Brian can help with this one.” Freddie shook his head.

“You should try him though darling. The media are only human, they are drawn to you because you are very special, but there are four of you in the band. I’m sure they would love to help if you let them.”
Freddie nodded.

His face was warm from the fire, and his eyes were glazed as though a little heavy.

Jim rested his head on the cushion next to Freddie and began to stroke his hair.

The heavy door barely creaked, but somehow he just knew it was opening. He stiffened with fear. It was as though his own heartbeat fell silent as he listened intently, praying for silence. He couldn’t open his eyes, he might see him.

He shuffled silently closer to his friend. Inch by inch trying to creep beneath him. Trying to curl smaller. Aiming to be invisible.

Silence.

Perhaps it wasn’t real. Perhaps he had been woken from a terrifying dream, and thought it was happening again.

Seconds passed. Felt like minutes.

He felt a hand close around his ankle. Unsure at first. Then definite.

He listened to the silence. Perhaps if he listened hard enough it would stay silent.

He was being lifted.

He couldn’t move. If he did he would know he was awake. If he could just pretend to be asleep maybe he would be left alone.

He was moving out of the room now. The door closed silently behind them.

He dared to open his eyes a crack as he was carried down the familiar path. The oil lamps on the walls lit the way. The tiny flickering flames made him think of the temple. The fire would protect him. The eternal flame. He begin to pray as he made his way tamaso ma jyotirgamaya. Help me, dear Lord, help me.

Too late. He was at the corridors end. The door opened.

He was lifted over a shoulder.

“Good evening Freddie” Slowly he opened his eyes. There were a handful of men in the room.

Their eyes glowed red.
A scream. Jim was awake in an instant. Another scream.

Freddie was sitting upright on the sofa. He gripped the edge, blanket tight to him.

Jim couldn’t be sure Freddie was awake.

What do you do in these situations? Should he wake him? Should he not? Is he already awake?

Jim carefully positioned himself so he was directly in Freddie’s line of sight.

He attempted to adjust the blanket. To uncurl Freddie’s fingers.

To make Freddie aware of his presence a little at a time.

His eyes were open, but they were not seeing Jim’s face, he was sure of that.

Jim reached out a hand and laid it carefully on Freddie’s shoulder.

“Freddie” he called softly. “Freddie, its me Jim. You’re having a nightmare.”

Freddie flung his arms out violently, pelting Jim in misdirected punches. He looked from one candle to the other as though confused by the light.

Jim hated to do it, but he had to restrain him. He pinned his arms by his sides with his own to stop the punches, then pulled him into a tight hug.

“It’s alright. You’re safe. It’s all over. You are having a nightmare Freddie. Come on back to me. It’s Jim.”

For the second time that evening Freddie sobbed his heart out on Jim’s shoulder.

He was awake now, and feeling very confused and stupid.

Freddie jumped up and tried to get out of the tangled blanket around himself.

“I want to go home, take me home” he cried.

Jim attempted to pull him back into his arms, but Freddie was putting up a fight.

“I shouldn’t be here, please take me home.”

“Freddie, I will take you home sweetheart, but I can’t take you like this. You need to calm down honey. Calm down and I’ll take you home.”

Freddie was gasping for breath. Appearing to panic more with every second that Jim didn’t take him home.

Jim couldn’t restrain him any longer. It wasn’t fair.

He attempted to wipe the tears from Freddie’s face, and tucked his hair behind his ears.

“Go and get dressed and I’ll take you home, ok?”

Freddie ran from the sofa up the stairs to retrieve his clothes.
Freddie was much calmer and more collected when he came downstairs.

He was dressed, including his jacket and boots, and looked like he had washed him face and brushed his hair.

He was feeling very stupid, and just wanted to be at home with the band, to pretend this evening had never happened.

Jim had turned on the living room lights, blown out the candles and folded up the blanket.

That helped a bit.

End of act one – the terrible scene.

Freddie held out his hand to Jim to come with him.

So this was cute Freddie.

So damn adorable that Jim would wonder where the wild wounded animal had gone.

So calm and so sweet that Jim wouldn’t raise any questions for fear of rippling the serenity.

So collected that his earlier behaviour must have been Jim’s imagination.

“You sure you’re ready to go?” Jim asked softly.

Freddie nodded with a smile.

“Please can we stop at the off license on the way?” Freddie asked taking some coins out of his jacket pocket, and frowning at how few there were.

“I think we deserve champagne to celebrate our first album.”

The smile was small, but at least it was real.

Freddie was quiet on the journey home, but the atmosphere was lighter.

Much like a summers day after a heavy storm.

Freddie did not speak of the events of the evening at all.

He spent the last of his money on champagne for the boys, and despite it being his last, he would not let Jim pay half.

Freddie was insistent that it was Jim’s treat too.

Jim wondered if it was to keep him quiet.
There was a celebratory feel in the house when Jim and Freddie arrived home.

Freddie presented the album with an enormous smile, and pulled the bubbly out from behind his back.

“To us darlings…and the best album ever produced.”

The boys linked arms and danced around the room. Success was theirs, and they deserved every second of it.

As Jim was about to leave for the evening a little worse for wear, he decided to take the bull by the horns.

He pulled Freddie into a hug, and whispered “Don’t forget to tell Brian.”

Brian had just reached the foot of the stairs “Tell Brian what?” he asked with a smile.

“Oh” said Freddie flippantly with a wave of his arm “I really hate doing the media stuff, can we share it?”

So that was all, was it? The cause of Freddie’s emotional shattering. Jim didn’t think so. He felt a little frustrated, but he knew the frustration was born of helplessness.

Freddie wandered away, and sat on the window seat with his drink.

It was like a scene from a movie. All he needed was some melancholy music, and pouring rain.

His reflection however told a different story.

It was not that of a happy young man who had just made his first album, but of a frightened young boy who was lost in the dazzle of early celebrity.

“Brian?” said Jim removing his jacket. “Do you mind if I stay after all?”

“Course not mate. The sofa is all yours.”

Freddie may never need him…but what if ….
Encounters: Top of the Pops

Chapter Summary

Queen get the opportunity to appear on Top of the Pops for the first time, but the offer is made by slimy record producer Sean. What other offers does he have up his sleeve?

Chapter Notes

Lovies I cannot imagine the hateful unscrupulous people Freddie must have encountered on his rise to fame 😓

When Jim awoke around 2 am on his third night at the royal household, he figured he may as well have moved in.

There was no real reason for him to have stayed this long.

He wondered if perhaps it was him that needed to heal from his own shock and helplessness at seeing Freddie crumble.

It felt good to be near Freddie in a domestic setting, and the boys made light and amusing company.

There were glimpses of the fragile person still there, but they were fleeting.

Snatches in certain lights. The tilt of his head. Tired eyes. A pause longer than necessary, or a melancholy melody.

It pleased Jim to see the light slowly returning to Freddie’s eyes. The sparkle in his personality that Jim had seen up on the podium the first time they had met.

He wondered if Freddie’s emotions - rather than running in limited waves with highs and lows like a life support monitor - were actually more like musical bars. Each line of the stave a different personality, vibrating in a jumble, or sometimes all at once.

Freddie had never mentioned his breakdown to Jim, and there was no clue as to its cause.

He also didn’t mention it to the boys, and once again Jim wondered if Freddie shared his true self with anyone.

Perhaps what Jim was seeing is what everyone saw - little glimpses and snapshots, designed to confuse perception, and persuade the remote viewer that it was them that was going mad.

*************************
“Fuck!” Jim shouted loudly, as he was awoken suddenly by the piano’s first note.

Freddie giggled.

“I’m sorry for waking you” he said biting his bottom lip, clearly not sorry at all.

Jim wanted to punish him.

Freddie played a lively melody. Then slammed the piano lid down forcefully, and swung around on his stool.

“I’m bored. Take me out” he said pouting.

So…we had a restless little boy today.

In fairness the boys had worked very hard since the release of their album.

They were each working on writing new material; together and separately.

They had barely looked up from their instruments in three days, and aside from sleeping at their house, Jim had also worked long shifts.

It surprised Jim how hard the boys worked.

As university students they could be forgiven for partying hard – they did when the mood took them - but they also knew their worth, and worked twice as hard to prove themselves.

They clashed sometimes.

Brian was very methodical in his approach, and he wrote music beautifully.

Freddie appeared to pull a melody out of the air, and hardly wrote anything down - to Brian’s frustration. He would then lock himself away for hours while he worked on his lyrics, hating to be disturbed and becoming quite morose.

Roger’s music was loud, lively, and fun– much like the man.

Deaky would have been happy to let the others write the hits, and was often heard saying ‘I’m just the bass player.’ With patience and perseverance the team nurtured his equal talent.

Money didn’t come easy.

They all had others jobs as well as university, but rent was expensive in Kensington.

Prenter had spent a lot of the money earned from the gigs on the tour. Had Brian arranged things, he would have been more frugal.

Jim was far from wealthy, but being the only one with a full time paying job, he liked to contribute when he could.

Freddie was very generous, and every penny he earned he somehow gave away.

Jim also knew that Freddie would be hurt if he didn’t accept his small tokens of friendship, so last night after work Jim hadn’t asked, he had just brought pizza home for everyone.
Jim had nearly passed out when Freddie actually ate something.

Freddie suddenly jumped up and stretched out his arms as though presenting to an audience.

“I haven’t been out in ages. I’m going to be a legend darling. I need to be seen.”

Jim desperately wanted to tell him that he certainly was seen.

He had to settle for chuckling.

“Where do you want to go?” Jim inquired.

Freddie thought for a moment before he said with a smile “Brighton.”

“Brighton?” echoed Jim, as though Freddie had just said the moon.

“Yes. Brighton. Take me to the promenade kind sir” he did a sweeping bow.

Jim thought about it. Why the hell not?

“Go on then. You can’t go like that, go and get yourself ready.”

“Yes” hissed Freddie clapping his hands together before galloping out of the room.

Jim could start getting ready in half an hour. He would still be ready first.

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Jim saw Brian coming down the path. He had one hand buried deep in his curls as though he was holding his own head on.

He looked like the weight of the world was on his shoulders.

Roger and Deaky also made an appearance.

“Fred’s in a good mood” said Roger with a wink “Did you…..you know? Give him another blowjob?”

Jim chuckled, but flushed scarlet when his mind flashed back to that evening.

“Freddie wants to go to Brighton today.” Jim smiled waiting for the boys’ reaction.

“Brighton??” and there it is. “What brought that on?” Roger had his hands on hips.

Deaky frowned and walked over to the window looking out “It’s a nice day. We should all go. Get some inspiration.”

“You know why he wants to go there don’t you?” said Roger with a grin. “It’s the gay capital. Fred’s on the pull. For fucks sake Jim just jump him already.”

“Rog” said Deaky blushing crimson. “Not everyone is like you.”

“What?” Roger shrugged “It’s what everyone is thinking.”
Brian popped his head around the door “Where’s Fred?” he whispered.

Jim pointed upstairs “Shower.”

Brian stepped into the room, and closed the door behind him.

“Lads we’ve got some trouble.” He held out the paper “You each need to read this before Freddie comes down. We need to decide what we’re going to do.”

Brian passed the paper to Deaky who began to read. His brow furrowing almost immediately.

Brian couldn’t meet anyone’s eye, his hand to his pursed lips.

Deaky handed the paper back to Brian. He couldn’t possibly have read it all. He didn’t have time.

“Well that’s all shit obviously” said Deaky.

“Did you notice who was credited with the photo and the spill?” Brian handed the paper to Jim and Roger “Read together, you need to be quick” he hissed.

Roger spotted it immediately “Paul fucking Prenter!”

Jim’s hand flew to his mouth when he saw the photo and read the caption.

“My bloody mother gave it to me!” said Brian. “I didn’t know where to put myself. She grabbed this copy off Mrs Bulsara’s doorstep. She can’t guarantee that Freddie’s parents won’t see it, but she has taken that copy at least.” Brian turned to Jim and said by way of explanation “My parents live next door but one to Freddie’s parents.”

“Thankfully Mum doesn’t believe a word of it.” He continued. “She thinks the sun shines out of Freddie. ‘All those lies about that sweet lovely boy’ she said. The question is….and I hate to say it…in light of what we know about Prenter…is any of it true?”

Jim and Roger looked at one another.

Jim sat down in the chair and dropped his head in his hands.

All that work. The tour, the album, and this was their first local newspaper coverage.

Truth be told he couldn’t bring himself to read all of it – the drugs and the prostitution was enough.

He knew it to be true.

He knew Freddie knew it to be true.

Jim’s heart was breaking.

Jim couldn’t reconcile it in his own head.

From the snippet of conversation he had heard on the tour bus, Freddie was resistant to Prenter’s demands.

Freddie had stumbled innocently into Paul’s trap the first night in Liverpool, when Jim had seen him take one of Paul’s friends outside with his own eyes, but had Prenter succeeded in coercing Freddie the second night?
They had been seen arguing, and then Freddie’s drink had been spiked.

Had Paul drugged Freddie so he would be easier to manipulate?

Had he succeeded that night too?

Or had Deaky, Roger and himself got to Freddie first?

Had Freddie taken any of the drugs – or the men for that matter – willingly, or was he in a drugged haze?

If Freddie had known what Paul was doing why would someone so successful, so fun, so adored, be willing to stoop to prostitution?

Freddie didn’t need the drugs. Jim had overheard him say so to Prenter.

Freddie hadn’t had anything stronger than champagne since the night they brought him home from Heaven.

He wasn’t an addict, there wasn’t even a reliance there.

There was a loud knock on the door.

Brian snatched the newspaper back. “We’ll deal with that later. We’re gonna have to talk to him though. God knows how he’s gonna take it” Brian shook his head as he headed for the door.

Nothing seemed to run smoothly anymore.

******************************

Brian showed Roy and Sean into the living room.

“Hey! How’s everyone?” asked Sean slapping the boys on their backs.

He stopped to look around “Where’s Freddie?”

“He’s getting ready” said Jim shaking Sean’s hand. “Good to see you again. Freddie wants to go to Brighton today.” Jim smiled.


Jim shrugged with a chuckle. “You know Freddie.”

“Oh yes, I know Freddie” said Sean with a grin.

A feint cry for help could be heard in the distance.

Jim and Roger looked at each other.

That was Freddie.

The boys ran up the stairs to find Freddie lying on his back in the middle of the bedroom floor.
“Oh my God! What’s happened?” Jim cried and rushed over to help him.

It was then he spotted the coat hanger.

“I can’t zip my jeans up” Freddie pouted.

He had the head of a metal coat hanger hooked through the zip trying to pull up the tightest item of clothing Jim had ever seen.

“Ahhhh They are so cool” yelled Roger rushing to grab the hanger. “Are these the ones from Biba? No wonder you’re skint. Breathe in Fred” he said yanking hard on the hanger.

Freddie looked sly for a moment before he admitted quietly “Paul bought them for me.”

Roger laughed “Good, I hope you bankrupt him. You deserve something out of that slimy toad.”

Freddie giggled. He was healing.

“You are going to injury him” stressed Jim, but he couldn’t help laughing out loud. “How the hell are you going to breathe?”

“I don’t care, they look so good.” Freddie grimaced as Roger pulled the zip a little bit higher with success, and quickly fastening the button.

Roger grabbed Freddie’s hands and slowly pulled him up from the floor.

They looked more than good. They looked delicious on him.

“Erm….Fred…what will you do if you need the toilet?” asked Roger tilting his head.

“I can’t go” wailed Freddie. “I’ll just have to hold it.”

“All day??” squeaked Roger with a laugh “You can’t wait five minutes.” Freddie pouted.

Jim, Freddie and Roger made their way back down the stairs and into the living room where the boys were talking in enthused tones.

“Here he is” shouted Sean holding out an LP to Freddie.

Jim was temporarily startled when instead of rushing over and flinging his arms around Sean, Freddie stepped back behind Jim and tucked a finger through his belt loop.

Well, the nature of shyness did pick inopportune moments, and Jim wasn’t going to push Freddie to the front like Prenter had.

Freddie had legs, he would greet his guests in his own time.

Sean passed the LP to Roger, who gushed over Freddie’s artwork, and the Queen emblem.

“Sean was blown away by the artwork” said Roy.
“I’ll bet he was” said Freddie acerbically.

“So anyway” Sean continued recovering immediately. “The album is in the shops, and in the greedy hands of local radio, so expect to be inundated with calls.” He waved his hand dismissively, “…but that’s not why I’m here…” he paused for effect “…how would you boys like to join us at Wood Lane this afternoon?”

The boys looked at each other.

“Bowie has cancelled Top of the Pops, the slot is yours if you want it?”

“Whoo-hoo!” Jim was nearly knocked unconscious when Freddie leaped onto his back with no warning.

He was in luck that Jim was quick enough to catch his legs.

He was in luck he didn’t tear his new jeans.

The rest of the band joined in the celebration as the boys danced and hugged.

“Sean, you’ll have to let Deaky have the bill for your work mate” offered Brian.

“Aah don’t worry about that” said Sean looking at Freddie. “Call it a token of a long fruitful business relationship.”

“Rog!” Freddie grabbed Roger’s hand “Come on, we need to sort our outfits for the show.”

They headed for the door, then Freddie stopped, turned, and said “Jim, come on!”

Brian laughed

“Looks like you’re choosing our outfits Jim” Jim rolled his eyes and chuckled.

Jim had no such complaints as he followed Freddie up the stairs. Instead he thanked the heavens for his fantastic view.

Jim smiled to himself, enchanted that Freddie couldn’t seem to do anything alone, and he wondered if he would be known as Freddie Mercury and his entourage when he was a big shot rock star.

When they entered Freddie and Roger’s room, Jim allowed himself to really look around this time.

It had been dark, and the curtains drawn the night he had slept here when Freddie was unwell, but he was fairly sure it hadn’t looked like this.

The walls on Freddie’s side of the room were lined with fabric. Bold, bright, beautiful colours as though from a sari. In various textures and layered over one another. There were hats and scarves and ornate fans strewn about haphazardly, but in an eye catching array. There was a fluffy bear sitting on an antique rocking chair.

Some thought had gone into this chaos.

Jim wondered about the hours Freddie had spent up in his room the day he had found out about Prenter’s treachery.

Is this how he had spent his time?
Beautifying and ordering his living space, if others prevented him from doing the same with his life.

Freddie and Roger began to pull out a number of outfits, swapping tops and jeans and trousers.

Roger drew the line at catsuits, but Jim did notice that he was comfortable to wear items of women’s clothing that Jim - as a gay man- would not want to wear.

He wasn’t one for all that.

Freddie looked adorable in it.

They decided to stick with the black and white theme, mainly because Brian and Deaky were comfortable with it, but also because the cameras would pick them up better.

The boys shared a stool while Roger straightened his hair with a straightening iron, and Freddie applied think black eyeliner - that made his eyes even more beautiful – if that was possible.

Jim’s heart stopped for a moment when he saw Freddie looking back at him in the mirror.

Had he stared too long?

Were his feelings obviously?

Perhaps not, because in the next moment Freddie rugby tackled Roger to the bed shouting “Top of the Pops – yeah!”

It was good to see the boys at play again.

Freddie held up a number of outfits against his body. His head tilted to one side as he perused his options.

“How do you think?” he asked chewing on a finger nail.

Jim was thanking God that Freddie wasn’t actually changing into each outfit in front of him – not with Roger present.

Jim would have him on his back in an instant.

What was Freddie actually thinking, thought Jim.

Freddie knew Jim was gay. What did he think was going through Jim’s mind when he paraded around looking so desirable?

Jim cast his mind back to the night in the club when he had told Freddie that one day he would be his.

Had Freddie conveniently forgotten that conversation?

Was he so drunk, or stoned?

Or did he think that Jim would blow hot and cold like he did.

The thing that concerned Jim the most, was that he seemed to have secured a certain amount of Freddie’s trust - which was no mean feat - but was it too safe a place to be?

If Jim made a move now, would he lose the trust he had so carefully nurtured.
Freddie seemed to have clearly defined boundaries – lover or friend. Did all his lovers have to not truly care about him, and could any of his friends ever be lovers?

Freddie handed Jim a jumbled lump of fabric. “Ok, we’ll take those” he winked at Jim “thank you sweetie.”

“Right let’s go and raid Brian’s room.”

Jim followed slowly behind, arms full of satin and silk and sequins.

“Won’t Brian and Deaky want to choose for themselves?” Jim asked quizzically.

“Nah” said Freddie with his head in the wardrobe.

“They might, but we won’t like what they choose, so no. Brian’s up for it, but Deaky always tries to blend in. He’s so beautiful, he needs to accentuate his gorgeous features more. That’s where I come in.”

Freddie reversed out of the wardrobe, and added some more clothing to Jim’s load.

So this is why Jim had been invited to come upstairs.

He didn’t mind one bit.

*****************************************************************

Top of the Pops was nothing like anyone expected.

It was underwhelming. The studio was compact. In fact it was nothing like a studio at all, more like an empty room with people milling about.

There were a number of teenagers that had been drafted in as a makeshift audience, who had to dance and wave their arms about when instructed.

The stage was like that which could be found in a community centre. The lighting was good though.

The lack of atmosphere completely knocked the boys off their kilter – especially when they learned that they wouldn’t actually be expected to play their instruments, and Freddie had to lip sync.

Roger was furious. He was given these plastic disks to hit, and complained he had received a better drum kit for his twelfth birthday.

Freddie’s shyness kicked in as it wasn’t quite dark enough, so they needed to do a second take.

Roger still looked bored to tears, and very pissed off.

Freddie struck the right note for the second take, after Jim gave him a little pep talk about pretending he was in his bedroom, and to just go out there and have fun.

Freddie’s performance art was improving.
He looked evil and enticing, snarling into the camera. Scary enough to frighten small children, but sexy enough to mesmerise any adult with a pulse, leaving them not entirely sure why.

Sean collared Jim watching the band make history.

“Bewitching isn’t he?” he nudged Jim out of his revere.

Jim chuckled “They all are. You know, it’s funny knowing them as people, and then watching them transform onstage. How about you? Your proteges up there? You’ve done loads for them in a very short time. Made it all come together?”

“Aah, it was nothing in the end. They had everything done, and Freddie is so charismatic up there that the rest sells itself” said Sean.

“Have you known the band long?” inquired Jim.

It was nice to be in the company of someone like himself – close to the band – but not part of the band.

“No, not at all. Only by reputation.” Sean sniggered. “It was Roy that happened to mention the other day that the band were in. When he said Freddie would be coming down later with the artwork, I was dying to meet him – especially after that newspaper article” he laughed.

“Oh” said Jim, suddenly feeling quite uncomfortable.

“Yeah, it’s rumoured Freddie will shag anyone.” Sean boasted.

Jim didn’t like where this line of conversation was going.

He liked Sean a lot, but anyone who knew Freddie personally would not be OK with that article – never mind impressed.

“Well…rumours can be deceptive.” said Jim diplomatically.

There was no denying that Freddie was well…..easy, but that didn’t define the whole man. In fact, it shrouded the real man.

“Oh God, you’re not homophobic are you? jeered Sean.

This conversation really was getting uncomfortable.

Jim shook his head “No, of course not. There is just a lot more to Freddie. The music, that’s what drives him. Drives them all.”

“Not according to that article” teased Sean.

Jim snapped “That article is a load of shit!”

Sean backed away with his hands raised.
Freddie was trying desperately to pull the zip back up on his new jeans after changing from his stage costume.

He had loved Top of the Pops – eventually - after he had finally got into it.

He could have done with a vodka or two to loosen him up.

It was a little uncool, and the atmosphere had been more staid than he was used to, but he trusted the show’s producers to weave their magic.

All in all it had been a fantastic experience, and would project Queen into every household.

Freddie jumped up and down clapping his hands.

Top of the Pops was a game changer.

He unlocked the toilet door and walked over to the sink. Perhaps a little water would help with the zip, it was nearly up.

The band were meant to be going for something to eat now though, and Freddie wondered how he could get away with not eating much without his boys noticing – especially Jim.

If Freddie ate like a sparrow, Jim had eyes like a hawk.

Freddie turned when he heard someone come into the bathroom.

His warm brown eyes met cool grey ones….Sean.

Sean smiled broadly and made his way over.

Freddie could not make his escape politely.

“I wondered when I would catch up with you.” Sean leered down at him.

Freddie didn’t know what to say.

“I wanted to talk to you about my little list.”

“List?” squeaked Freddie in a very small voice.

Sean’s eyes travelled down to where Freddie’s hands were holding his zip together.

“Yes. The list contains the names and dates of a number of industry big wigs – the great and the good – who will be gathering for their annual talent hunt. Bands - just like little Queen – get the opportunity to perform in front of an audience just packed with hungry little record labels moguls. Big opportunity for you Freddie. However….”

Sean pushed Freddie’s hands away from his zip, and slid his own hand inside Freddie’s jeans, curling it around his hip and pulling Freddie towards him “….it won’t be cheap for me to get my hands on it though. It’ll cost big, if you understand me, so…..what I want to know is - do you want the list?”
Encounters: Group Hugs

Chapter Summary

The boys gather around the TV to watch their first appearance on Top of the Pops. Brian gently breaks the news of the newspaper article to Freddie – who unsurprisingly does not react well.

Chapter Notes

Lovies, who agrees that Freddie is such a naughty little flirt?? 😊

Sean jumped away from Freddie when he heard the latch being drawn back on the cubicle door.

Brian came out, and approached Sean enthusiastically.

“Did I just hear you correctly Sean? Can you get us that list please? I know you said it will cost big, but I think it could be invaluable to us. We’ve been looking for new avenues. We’re keen to start touring again.”

Freddie took the opportunity to back away tugging hard on the zip.

Sean recovered quickly from his indiscretion “Yes, of course. Who manages you? I can arrange for it to be sent to your manager?”

“That would be me” said Brian looking at Freddie nervously. “We’re a bit distrustful of management at the moment, having just had our fingers burnt. Who knows, maybe we can find decent representation at this gathering of the great and the good.” Brian smiled and shook Sean’s hand.

Freddie was already heading towards the door. His zip had finally gone up, but he couldn’t fasten the button - he no longer cared.

“Hey, leave it like that Fred” laughed Brian. You’ll look appealing to your female fans.”

************************************

The boys were very excited about their Top of the Pops appearance.

They were home and showered after their meal, and were relaxing in the living room.

Bottles of beer and wine were filtering in from the kitchen ready to be used to toast the show.
Freddie wandered into the living room wearing just a tiny pair of silk shorts, and clutching a glass of white wine.

Jim felt like all the air had been sucked from the room.

He didn’t know where to look for the best, and he suddenly couldn’t sit comfortably.

He knew his face must be luminous. It was even harder that the boys all knew of his feelings.

If Freddie sat down beside him on the sofa now; if he felt his heat, smelled his perfume – or worse – Freddie cuddled up to him the way he did sometimes, Jim feared he wouldn't be able to control his own body.

Thankfully Freddie momentarily sat at the window seat.

Brian handed a bottle of beer to a very uncomfortable looking Jim.

He turned his attention to Freddie, and made the link.

“Fred go and put some clothes on please, we have a guest” said Brian with raised eyebrows. Sometimes he felt like Freddie’s Father.

Freddie giggled into his wine glass. “That’s not a guest, that’s Jim.”

He raised his eyes flirtatiously, locking them on Jim and said quietly so only Jim could hear “He’s seen more than this.”

Jim was zapped back to the night he had brought Freddie to orgasm on this very sofa. He shuffled uncomfortably, before returning the dig “Did you ever retrieve your underwear?”

“Touché” said Freddie with a playful wink.

Jim lost the fight with his own body.

“Freddie!” Brian was more insistent.

Freddie rolled his eyes, slowly getting to his feet. He turned back to Jim

“How much clothing is enough dear?” he asked so innocently.

“You can take it all off for me darling” Jim said boldly meeting Freddie’s stare.

Freddie stared back at Jim for a moment longer, raised a quizzical eyebrow, and then swept out of the room.

Jim let out an audible sigh.

Could it really be that simple?

Could he just let Freddie know he wanted him.

That he had noticed.

That the more he revealed of his body, the more Jim wanted.

Would Freddie simply fall at his feet?
Had Jim completely misread the situation?

“Lads” started Brian “We need to talk to Freddie about the article.”

Roger groaned “For fuck’s sake Bri, can’t we just watch Top of the Pops?!”

Roger did not relish the idea of upsetting his friend again. He’d only just recovered from the whole Prenter disaster.

Brian ran his fingers through his curls. “Roger, I know how you feel….I do….but what happens if Freddie finds out about this article from someone other than us? This carnival is just going to get bigger – production companies, record labels, managers, they are all going to see it. What if Freddie’s parents see it, we need to prepare him for that possibility. He needs to have a response ready.”

Brian’s speech was too similar to the one that Freddie had given Jim the night he had broken down.

Had Freddie already seen the article, wondered Jim.

Was that the cause of his pain?

“You’re right” said Roger raising his hand “you’re right. But I can tell you now, you’ll get nothing out of him, and you’ll only upset him.”

“Stop making me the bad guy Rog!” Brian was annoyed. “I’m trying to protect him.”

“Ok” said Roger defeated “I know, I know Bri, I know you are” he took a sip of his beer. “Can we watch Top of the Pops first? Put him on a high before we wreck him.”

Jim’s heart sank.

***********************

Freddie came back into the room wearing the exact same lack of clothing as he left. He was however holding his blanket.

He sat down on the sofa furthest away from Jim, and with a playful glance, shook out the blanket and dramatically wrapped it around himself, so only his head and his arms were showing.

He stuck his tongue out at Jim, then took a sip of his wine never taking his eyes off Jim’s face.

Jim wondered if it was possible to touch Freddie discretely under the blanket in a room full of people.

Freddie clearly wanted it.

Just then the Top of the Pops theme tune started, and everyone’s attention was on the TV.

The wait felt like forever, as one song was played, then another, then another. Finally Queen came on - Seven Seas of Rhye.

The BBC producers had done them justice, and the band looked so much more like professional
showmen than when they had actually been in the studio.

The lighting and camera showed each member of the band at their best.

“You look bored as fuck Rog” Freddie giggled.

“I was. Those drums were shit” Roger laughed too.

He couldn’t believe that somehow they had made this afternoon’s mock up look so professional.

“Gosh” said Freddie whimsically “our costumes look amazing.”

“Great work Brian” gushed Deaky. “You actually look like you’re playing that thing.”

Brian laughed.

“Fred you’re amazing!” said Brian

“Did you once look at the camera?” asked Roger.

Freddie shook his head “No, I pretended it wasn’t there. The camera really put me off on the first take. I felt like it was inside my head.”

“How are you going to be an entertainer Fred, if you can’t look at the camera” laughed Roger.

Jim was surprised to hear Freddie giggle, he had been expecting him to take Roger’s comment as criticism.

“He’ll get used to it, it’s just a bit of stage fright” said Jim quickly.

“I look scary” Freddie laughed. Then he gasped “Darlings, people can actually buy our record in the shops tomorrow.”

They all jumped out of their seats and excitedly hugged, and congratulated each other on their fantastic achievement.

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Brian stood, took Freddie’s wine glass from him, and disappeared into the kitchen, returning moments later with a full glass.

“Fred, we need to talk to you about something.”

You could have heard a pin drop.

Brian handed him the newspaper, Freddie’s photo was clearly showing.

“Unfortunately this is our first local press coverage.”

Freddie looked down at the newspaper, but did not read any of it.
He didn’t need to.

Freddie raised his head slowly, there were tears in his eyes “Do you want me to leave the band?”

Roger rushed over to his friend wrapping him and his blanket in a big hug.

“Why the hell would you think that Freddie?” said Brian incredulous. “There’s no Queen without you. We’re a team. Why on earth do you think we would just drop you like that?”

Freddie didn’t reply. He dropped his head on Roger’s shoulder.

“There are two things I…we…” Brian swept out his arm to indicate everyone in the room “…are concerned with - will this harm our career, and…..” Brian stuttered before saying softly “is any of this true Fred?”

There was more silence.

Freddie didn’t say anything.

He didn’t need to.

The colouring of his cheeks, and his downcast eyes spoke volumes.

“Why Freddie?” asked Deaky gently.

No response.

“So, the number of men you’ve been seen with lately…. and you being poorly the other day at Heaven – was it all to do with this?” Brian gestured towards the newspaper.

“What happened to the money?” Roger asked gently rubbing Freddie’s back.

Freddie shrugged his shoulders.

“You poor thing, come here.” Roger pulled Freddie into another hug.

Jim felt very uncomfortable witnessing this.

For the first time since becoming friends with this wonderful group of men, Jim felt like the outsider he was.

He had known about this – did it make him as culpable?

He had tried to tell Roger, but had he tried hard enough?

“Freddie” Brian cleared his throat making his voice seem louder “This is not OK behaviour. It’s not acceptable…..”

“What Brian means…” Deaky cut in, glaring at Brian “…is that it’s not acceptable that you be treated in this way.” Brian nodded realising his mistake. “It’s not OK, why is this appalling behaviour acceptable to you?” Deaky asked softly.

Silence.

“It’s fine” Freddie mumbled “I know what Brian meant.” He got up and rushed towards the door.

Jim was on his feet “Freddie, no please, don’t go, let us help you.” Jim managed to reach him and
wrapped an arm around his waist, but Freddie pushed Jim away, ran from the room and slammed the door.

Deaky and Jim turned to Brian in anger. “Nice one Bri” said Deaky “well put.”

“It’s not Brian’s fault Deaks” said Roger quietly. “It’s mine. Jim told me exactly what Prenter was doing. In fact he got me by the throat when I wouldn’t listen. I thought he was exaggerating. I thought he was jealous.” Roger looked directly at Jim “I’m so sorry Jim. I’ve let you down, and I’ve let Freddie down. It seems I’m the only person in the room that has Fred’s ear…..but he doesn’t have mine.”

Roger stood suddenly and thrust his fist into the wall with a loud growl. He painfully connected with the wall a couple more times before Jim got hold of him, and stilled his bleeding hand.

********************

Half an hour later, the boys were still sitting in the living room in silence.

Roger was sporting a large white bandage.

The living room door crashed back, and Freddie stumbled through it hopping as he tried to squeeze his foot into his platform boot.

He looked sensational.

He had his new jeans on again, this time with an over sized metallic belt. A black shiny shirt hanging loose, and his make-up was immaculate.

For the second time that day, Jim couldn’t breathe.

“Fuck Prenter” shouted Freddie. “He never wanted me, not really. I’ll find someone who does,” and with that he slammed the door.

The boys looked at each other.

Jim recovered first.

He jumped up from his chair rushing towards the door “Shit, shit, shit, someone stop him, where’s he going?”

“Leave him” said Roger quietly. “Let him deal with it in his own way. Freddie in a shit is a nightmare to deal with. He’ll fuck it out of his system tonight, and be a different man in the morning.”

“You can’t seriously think this is healthy Roger?” yelled Jim. “Anything could happen to him. He’s a local bloody celebrity!” His hand was in his hair.

“Jim you’re doing it again. Stop. He needs to deal with this himself…and if you suggest making him tea I punch you between the eyes” yelled Roger.

Jim sank back in his chair feeling extremely uneasy. He knew Freddie could look after himself. He had witnessed him beat two men.
He had also seen him fall apart very recently.

No. Jim wasn’t comfortable with this at all.

Jim respected Freddie for his intellect, his passion, the man he was.

He could also appreciate the physical – what older men could see in the clubs - young, attractive, gullible, acquiescent.

He’d do whatever he was asked to feel good.

They wouldn’t even have to say please.

If he did say no, he was small enough to coerce.

It was clear that Roger loved his friend dearly, and would give his life to protect him, but like Freddie, he lacked a little maturity.

He would leave a respectable length of time, then he would make the excuse that he was heading home, and he would go into town and look for Freddie.

*************************

Roger awoke suddenly.

He looked over to where Freddie slept, and could make out from the lack of a Freddie shaped lump that he wasn’t home yet.

He rolled onto his side reaching for the alarm clock on the bedside table. It was only 1.30 am. Not unusual that Freddie wouldn’t be back yet.

He rolled onto his back running his fingers through his knotty hair.

He felt hot and sweaty, and wondered what had caused him to wake so suddenly.

He tried to recall his dream, but nothing would come to mind.

Roger sat up and reached over to open the window.

It was a very stuffy night.

He leaned out of the window for a moment taking in gulps of air trying to cool himself down.

It was then he heard it.

A noise downstairs.

He leaned up onto his elbow straining to listen.

Another crash.

He leaped out of bed grabbing for the shorts that he had left crumpled on the floor, and was in them in seconds.
He slowly opened the door and crept out onto the hallway.

He could hear whispers. People talking. There was definitely someone downstairs. More than one person.

He heard more crashing and it sounded like someone was trying to knock down the wall.

He could hear whispers, and gasps this time.

Finally he heard a sound he could hang on to.

It sounded like Freddie shouting.

Roger was running down the stairs as fast as he could without making any noise.

He rounded the curve of the steps into the hallway, and stopped abruptly at what he saw.

He could make out two people.

Freddie was being held up against the wall, arms above his head. His eyes were closed, his head thrown back.

Roger could make out another man.

He let out a shocked scream when he realised what he was witnessing – the white arse of another man screwing his best friend.

Roger’s scream brought Freddie back to earth in an instant.

“No, stop please!” Freddie screamed at the man trying to shake himself loose. “Stop, stop!”

The man seemed to have gone deaf, and seconds later groaned loudly in orgasm.

“My eyes” screamed Roger running into the kitchen.

As soon as he was able, Freddie ran after Roger.

He was mortified.

He took in Roger’s stance.

His back turned to him.

His head bowed.

His fists clenched.

He was red to his ears.

Freddie rushed to the sink and began furiously washing his hands.

He needed to be clean before he gave his best friend a hug.

“Rogee, Rogee I’m sooo sorry. I didn’t mean for you to see us doing that. I didn’t realise you would be awake. Please forgive me. I can’t stand it when you’re cross with me” pleaded Freddie.

Freddie bowed his head as years of shame washed over him.
Realising he was gay.
Being caught with a boy he loved.
Being sent home.
The man strode into the kitchen pushing Freddie to one side.
He held out his hand to Roger “Bill Reid, pleased to meet you.”
Roger turned quickly towards him, his bandaged right hand connected hard with Bill’s cheekbone.
“No, means no” yelled Roger.
He punched him again, this time in the eye “and stop, means stop.”
Encounters: Incendiary

Chapter Summary

Freddie’s new boyfriend doesn’t make a very good first impression on the band - especially Roger - as some important issues are raised. Jim watches events unfolding from afar.

Chapter Notes

Lovies there is a lot of dialogue in this chapter, with some important issues being discussed. Oh….and a little bit of action……😊

Bill turned slowly clutching the left side of his face.

Without warning he grabbed Roger, pushing him onto the table and raining punches down on his head.

Roger was not going to be beaten.

He kicked and punched his way back into the fight, knocking Bill onto the cooker.

Then they were on the other side of the kitchen.

Crockery and cups flying everywhere and smashing on the floor.

Freddie was jumping up and down screaming, his hands over his ears, yanking at his hair.

If he had been able to stop them fighting, he wouldn’t have known which one to defend – his best friend who had assaulted his guest, or his guest who was beating his best friend.

They were going to hurt each other, and it was all his fault.

Realising his helplessness, Freddie ran to the bottom of the stairs and screamed “help me please” to Brian and Deaky who were running down the stairs, while simultaneously pulling t-shirts over their heads.

Deaky was swinging a baseball bat in one hand.

Freddie was on the edge of hysteria by the time Brian’s foot hit the bottom step.

He pointed at the kitchen, one arm wrapped around his own waist rocking on the spot. “They won’t stop, make them stop” he cried.

Brian rapped on the door loudly and shouted “Oy knuckle heads” to no avail.

Deaky slipped into the kitchen, coolly reached into the cupboard, produced two pan lids and
repeatedly bashed them together.

The sound would have raised the dead. Perhaps there was a percussionist in Deaky after all.

Bill pulled away, taking a fist full of Roger’s hair with him. His face swollen, and his lips bloody.

Roger seemed to have come off better, although his knuckles were bleeding through his bandage, which was now hanging off.

Roger quickly ran a hand through his hair, and looked around as though seeing his house mates for the first time.

He noticed Freddie in the doorway, weeping but much calmer now.

“What the fuck is going on?” yelled Brian looking around the kitchen.

It wasn’t often that Brian lost his temper, but when it blew, it blew.

“Who are you?” he demanded roughly to Bill.

“I’m Bill Reid, a …..friend of Freddie’s” he pointed to Freddie who was still hovering in the doorway, as though frightened they might start again.

“Friend? Fuck off” yelled Roger, wiping one hand over his face, and shaking a finger at Bill with the other.

“He yelled and yelled at you to stop, I heard him. Gone fucking deaf have you?”

Bill looked very uncomfortable.

“It wasn’t like that” he said “I….didn’t know what was going on” he finished carefully.

“What is going on?” asked Deaky frowning. “I’d really like to know because it’s 2 o’clock in the morning, and I shouldn’t be awake.”

Brian pulled out the chairs from the kitchen table. “Sit, all of you.” he said sternly.

He swept his arm in the air. “Freddie get this lot cleaned up. I’ll put the kettle on.”

For once, Freddie didn’t complain about having to clean up. He seemed relieved to escape the kitchen, and took his time hunting for the dustpan and brush.

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Five steaming cups sat in the centre of the wooden table, around which sat five sulking men.

Freddie was still upset, and started to shiver.

Roger asked to be excused and went upstairs to get Freddie’s blanket, wrapping it around his shoulders on his return.

Roger gave Freddie a squeeze, and whispered “I’m sorry” before he sat back down.
Brian - ever level headed - started proceedings.

“Right, everybody will get a turn to give their side, with the exception of myself and Deaky who
don’t have a clue what’s going on. Roger - your turn.”

Bill started to protest, but shut up when he saw Brian’s expression. A man he had never met, who
appeared to be telling him what to do.

He didn’t sign up for any of this, he’d wanted to get wrecked, fuck the exotic beauty he’d pulled at
the bar, and sleep both off.

Roger was much calmer now, especially seeing Freddie so upset for the second time today.

“I was woken by a noise downstairs. Freddie wasn’t home, and I was worried. I heard shouting and
realised it was Freddie’s voice. I ran down, and that prick…” he said pointing across the table at Bill
“…was fucking Freddie’s brains out on the wall over there. It gave me a shock, I can tell you, maybe
I over reacted. Then I heard Freddie screaming at him to stop over and over again, and he carried
right on.”

Roger was getting angry again poking his finger towards Bill.

“So, you punched him?” said Deaky filling in the gaps.

“Well it’s not fucking right…he said stop, and…..” Roger continued.

Brian raised a hand in Roger’s direction, then pointed to Bill

“Bill, go on.”

“It was nothing like what he said” he shouted. Not in the slightest liking what he was being accused
of.

“Freddie invited me in. Yes, we were having sex…” he turned to Roger “…offend you that does it…
two men having sex?”

Roger tutted and muttered under his breath.

“Freddie was enjoying himself, weren’t you Freddie?”

Freddie couldn’t raise his eyes from his hands folded in his lap.

He felt like he was at school again.

He quickly nodded his head, but he couldn’t look at the others.

“….and then he…” Bill jabbed his finger towards Roger “…starting whaling like a banshee about
fuck all.” Bill paused for a moment.

“I was passed the point of return …if you know what I mean” his face was flaming now.

Brian held his hand up. He didn’t need to know that.

“Ok….Freddie?”

“Can I just…..go to bed?” Freddie asked wrapping his blanket tighter around himself.
“In a minute. Did this man hurt you like Roger said he did?” demanded Brian.

Freddie shook his head. “It was just a misunderstanding. Rogee had a shock.” He leaned over the table and squeezed Roger’s good hand “I’m sorry darling.”

Roger nodded, but still couldn’t bring himself to look at Bill.

“Right, that’s it then. I’m going to bed. Can you be trusted down here on your own?” Brian looked from Roger to Bill, but mainly at Bill.

“Going to bed” mumbled Roger heading for the door.

Freddie turned to Bill and gave him a hug “I’m sorry darling. Roger’s cool, you’ll see.”

“Hmmmm” said Bill. “If this carnival is over, I’ll be off.” At that he swept out of the door ignoring Freddie’s attempts to smooth his feathers.

Freddie turned, Brian and Deaky were standing at the bottom of the stairs.

He couldn’t meet their eyes.

He was so disappointed in himself.

He’d had a good night, and Bill was so attentive.

It had felt good until Roger was hurt because of him.

He popped into the kitchen to get his blanket, and trailed it behind him all the way up the stairs.

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“I’m telling you he’s a twat” said Roger not quite able to let it go.

The boys had popped into the Market Tavern for a pint. They didn’t have much money, but Jim was getting paid tonight and had offered to buy the drinks.

Jim looked over to where Freddie was cozied up with a dour looking man.

Freddie was dressed to kill – tastefully – and seemed to be fluttering around the man. Batting his eyelashes and looking so demure.

“Roger, you’re acting like Bill assaulted Freddie, he explained, it wasn’t what you thought, now let it go.” Deaky was becoming frustrated.

“You weren’t there Deaky. It was fucking awful.” Roger snapped.

“All I’m saying is look at him. Freddie is happy. Leave him be” said Deaky hoping that would be the end of it.

Unfortunately Jim caught the tail end of the conversation. “Why did you think Bill assaulted Freddie Rog?”
Brian and Deaky groaned, and rolled their eyes sickened at the thought of hearing this again.

Roger raised his hand “I’ll be diplomatic” he said sharply. “I interrupted Freddie and Bill having sex last night. Gave me a bit of a shock, I can’t un-see that” he raised his hand again. ”Freddie started yelling at Bill to stop and he didn’t. He ploughed on to his natural end….if you catch my drift. I don’t think it’s right.”

“Roger, thanks for putting that imagine in Jim’s head. If he walks over there now, and rips Bill’s head off, what you gonna do?” snapped Brian, thinking only of Jim’s sanity, and how little he needed to know all this.

Roger tutted “Help Jim obviously!”

“Hang on….no” started Jim, but he was calm. “I’m with Roger. I’ve taken that role in a number of relationships in the early days, and it’s a very trusting thing he’s doing. You have got to be intuitive to your partner’s body. Stop is stop. It doesn’t matter what point you’re at, and it doesn’t matter if your partner is male.”

Roger high fived Jim.

“Well Fred tops too and he knows this stuff” said Roger.

“Ooooooh” Brian cast Roger a evil glare, and Deaky covered his ears.

“I’m just saying, Fred’s versatile, he knows how the other person can feel.”

Brian looked at Jim defeated “No offence mate, but since you came into our lives, all I’m hearing about is Fred’s sex life.”

Jim chuckled. He wasn’t even there. He was grateful he wasn’t.

“He has a point” followed Deaky. “How often do you hear about Veronica and I, or Brian and Chrissie? You just don’t.”

Jim cleared his throat politely “Yes, well. Freddie does seems to bounce from one questionable relationship to another rather publicly” he said diplomatically, while burning up inside at this latest development.

“Yeah Jim, just fuck him will you! It’s time he was with a nice guy” said Roger.

Jim was relieved and a little flattered to hear Roger say that. In the short period of time they had known each other, Roger was now starting to poke holes in the men that Freddie selected.

The timing was uncanny.

Just as Jim had entered Freddie’s life wanting a lasting relationship, Freddie had started to embark upon relationships that did last more than a night – but with the worst kind of men.

Jim exhaled loudly and thought about his next sentence before he began.

“It’s tricky Rog. I don’t want to be a one night stand to Freddie. I know the man underneath. I really like that man. That’s the man I want. You’ve said so many times that I can’t protect him from himself. He’s got to want the kind of relationship I want to have with him. He needs to want me – and not just for a night. I’m too far gone now.”

Jim might as well have asked for the crown jewels to be delivered to him on a platter.
Brian looked at him with sympathy for a moment before changing the subject.

“Anyway, enough of Freddie’s sex life.” Brian jumped up and grabbed his guitar. “Shall we have a chat about what happens next?”

Deaky got up too and pointed to a larger table “There?”

Brian waved to Freddie “Fred, band meeting.”

Freddie didn’t hear a thing, he was too busy kissing Bill.

************************************************

Jim considered what an odd situation he was in, and how far removed he was from his home town of Carlow in Ireland.

He was sitting at the liveliest table in the bar. Not just any bar – but his place of work. A place he was known and trusted, and respected.

He was a little drunk.

The band seemed to drink more wine, champagne and cocktails than Jim was used to, but he wasn’t drunk enough for his senses to clock off.

To dull his awareness of the dangers associated with alcohol, recreational drug use, and gay culture.

He – Jim Hutton – was sitting with his friends – a rock band, a sound engineer and a record producer.

He couldn’t have pictured this in his wildest dreams.

He was seated in the perfect spot – opposite Freddie.

Not perfect by any stretch, but perfect to peruse the scene, and make some assessments.

Jim didn’t know what to make of Bill.

He seemed to have come from nowhere.

They hadn’t even been formally introduced.

Bill had arrived at the table still attached to Freddie for the band meeting.

The band were not happy about that.

Roger made it obvious he was very unhappy.

Brian and Deaky had been disadvantaged by Freddie’s love life so recently it was raw, and they did not appreciate another of Freddie’s pick-ups demanding his attention while he worked.

As far as Jim was concerned, Bill had a lot of points to make up with him already.

He was holding Freddie, and that automatically earned him a place in Jim’s black book.
Jim turned his attention to Roy and Sean, who had joined them shortly after the meeting.

Roy, he liked. Although much like Deaky he was very shy, and only spoke when he needed to. Very knowledgeable man when it came to the nuts and bolts of his trade.

Jim wasn’t sure about Sean anymore.

He couldn’t dismiss him based on a few flippant comments about a newspaper article, about a man he barely knew.

It had got Jim’s back up for sure, and he had made his feelings known.

He hadn’t mentioned it to the others though, Sean had done a lot for Queen, and he had been very approachable and helpful the first time they had met at the studio.

It seemed the music industry was full of unknown quantities, and Jim worried for Freddie.

He had sensed a fragility in Freddie from the first time he had met him.

Cleverly masked, but it was there.

He feared that person would shatter if any further pressure was applied.

He needed someone to look out for him.

Someone to shield him from the harder knocks of life, just for a while until he grew a little harder, a little more confident.

Bill left the table, and Freddie slumped back in his seat.

He seemed to head inwards, picking at his nails, as though he was somewhere far away.

Jim watched his face.

His eyes were cast down into his lap, stopping Jim from seeing what he was thinking, but his overall demeanour did not look happy.

He reminded Jim of a child’s doll. Left on a chair alone until the child returned to pick it up again.

Sean shuffled his chair closer to Freddie and nudged him in fun. Freddie seemed to edge away momentarily, but nonetheless smiled brightly and was animated in his conversation.

Perhaps a number of children wanted to play with this doll.

Sean’s voice could be heard above the noise of the bar “So you’re telling me this guy drugged you, and what….rented you out by the hour like some bimbo?” Sean howled with laughter “I’ve heard it all now.”

Jim looked over towards Brian, Roger and Deaky, but they were laughing at their own joke, and hadn’t heard Sean’s comments.

Jim poised to get up, to go and speak to Freddie, to change the subject, to offer him someone else to talk to, but Bill was making his way back to the table carrying a tray full of drinks.

He handed a shot to everyone and put some more in the centre of the table.
“Come on drink up!” said Bill already swaying.

He placed his hand under the bottom of Freddie’s glass so he couldn’t stopping drinking. Then quickly put another to his lips when that one was finished.

Freddie finished his second drink, and crawled into Bill’s lap away from Sean.

Sean didn’t take the hint, and shuffled his chair up closer to Bill and Freddie.

“Bill, Bill, have you heard this?” Sean tapped Bill on the shoulder. “Freddie says Paul Prenter drugged him and sold him into prostitution.”

Bill pushed Freddie back into his own chair, then pulled the chair towards him territorially.

“Likely story. You’re just a terrible little tart hey” he teased Freddie. “You need to man up, and just admit that you wanted a queue of conquests. Not anymore though, you’re with me.” Bill pointed at his chest and sunk another drink.

Freddie giggled and didn’t even attempt to defend himself.

He was very drunk, his sparkly eyes glazing over.

Jim looked around the table.

Roger was also very drunk, and it saddened Jim that Roger was so distant from Freddie.

He was used to being wound up by the pair of them when they played their drinking games – often the victim of a gentle ribbing.

Jim looked back to Freddie sandwiched between Bill and Sean, who were getting on like a house on fire.

Maybe Jim would leave for the evening. It seemed an appropriate time before things got out of hand.

Jim stood up and said goodnight to the boys.

He wandered around the table to say goodnight to Freddie - hopeful of a hug - when Bill jumped up from his seat, grabbed the front of Sean’s t-shirt and launched him across the table away from Freddie.

There was a monumental sound of smashing glass, as the table fell over taking the drinks with it.

Freddie yelped and ran away from the scene, tripping over Jim’s foot and falling straight into his arms.

Roger launched himself onto Bill’s back flailing wildly. He had probably wanted to do that all day.

Brian, Deaky and Roy tried desperately to rescue Sean from the bottom of the pack, taking a few of Bill and Roger’s punches in the process.

Jim reached out a hand and grabbed Roger’s shirt pulling him from the fray.

Brian and Deaky walked carefully around to Jim and Freddie, while Roy helped a furious alcohol soaked Sean onto his feet.

“You sure about this bloke Fred?” asked Brian angrily shaking alcohol from his bare arms.
Freddie was trembling and rubbing his hands up and down his arms. Shakily he said “Sean deserved that. Sean deserved it, please don’t make me tell you why.”
Encounters: The Demon Drink

Chapter Summary

Freddie is tasked with collecting the venue list from the studio by himself. Does he have the strength to face Sean, or will he risk Queen’s future success?

Chapter Notes

Lovies – Who can remember their very first hangover?? Urgh!

Work is demanding rather too much of my time at the moment unfortunately, so my updates may be a little slower paced – how rude of them!

Freddie inhaled sharply on his cigarette, and paced from one side of the doorway to the other.

His future – the band’s future lie in that building.

The difference between success and failure.

The difference between having the opportunity to play in front of the industries greatest influences, or remaining at home.

The chance to see the world. To sing for thousands of people. To change lives. To spread joy.

The cigarette burned down to his fingers. He threw it onto the ground and stamped it out, pulling the lapels of his small denim jacket closer around him.

Seconds passed before he took another cigarette out of his pocket and lit it.

It would have been so much easier if Bill had just come with him.

He had nagged, and begged, and pleaded.

He had offered a blowjob every day this week, but Bill insisted he would not help Freddie to secure the list of venues that the industry’s most important people would be appearing at.

Freddie was losing his touch.

Freddie had assured him that he didn’t even have to apologise for punching Sean last night – just stand beside Freddie while he collected the list.

Why did Brian have to assign this task to Freddie?

Why couldn’t Roger or Deaky do it?

Why couldn’t Freddie have just said no.
Have just said I can’t Brian because that man coerced me into having sex the other night. He didn’t rape me, but he gave me no choice. I was on my own. I couldn’t call for help, and I didn’t want to let you down. He forced me to relive my very worst nightmares, and to be a burden to Jim – the man who has helped us so much.

Freddie knew why.

He couldn’t face being called a liar again. He couldn’t admit to being that easy. He couldn’t admit to it being his fault, for allowing Him in, just for being ….himself.

Freddie found the dare easier than the truth.

He took another look at the studio door, and with the echo of a cheering crowd in his ears, he ran away.

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Jim knocked on the front door and pushed it open.

“Hello” he called into the hallway “Morning…anyone home?”

“Come in mate” said Brian from behind the door. He was dressed ready to leave the house, and was just pulling his shoes on. He looked stressed and hurried.

“Just thought I would pop in for a catch up before work” said Jim. “Everything alright mate?” he asked taking in Brian’s worried expression.

“Fucking Freddie! He’s lying in there on the sofa dying from the world’s biggest fucking hangover. Just one job! All he had to do was collect that list from Sean. One job! What did he do? Went on an all day bender with Bill instead. Rolled in at 4 o’clock this morning, waking everybody in the house again. I need to go to uni today, I’ve missed too many lectures, and because of him…” Brian pointed towards the closed living room door “…Roger can’t open the stall. He can’t do it all on his own, so we lose a day’s pay. I’m sick of his fucking melodrama.”

Brian took a breath and shook his head, running one hand through his curls. “Sorry mate, you don’t need my woes. Listen, I’ve got to dash, but Roger is upstairs. Help yourself to a cuppa, and I’ll see you this evening if you’re up for it?”

Jim nodded with concern “Off you go Brian. I’ve got it, don’t worry about a thing.”

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Jim carefully pushed open the living room door.

The room was in darkness.

“Go away, I’m horrid” said a small voice from within.

Jim smiled to himself, walked into the room and quietly closed the door behind him.
Freddie was lying on the sofa in just a pair of boxers. His blanket was crumpled up around his feet, and he had one arm slung dramatically across his forehead.

There was a bucket on the floor beside the sofa.

Jim tiptoed over to the window.

“Please don’t let the light in, I’ll be sick” pleaded Freddie.

Jim chuckled softly.

“I’m just going to open the window a little bit, get you some fresh air, then I promise I’ll close the curtains again.”

Jim fulfilled his promise, and then sat down on the floor beside the sofa.

“Don’t touch me!” said Freddie.

Jim couldn’t help but laugh out loud. “I won’t touch you sweetheart. Freddie is this your first hangover – unless you count being knocked out on cocaine of course?”

“I’m not hungover” wailed Freddie “I’m poorly. Don’t listen to Brian, he was so mean to me, and I can’t even fight back.”

We really did have an indulgent little princess this morning.

Jim was enamoured, he loved this side to Freddie.

“I remember my first hangover” said Jim softly.

“I’m not hungover!” wailed Freddie.

“Well, obviously YOU aren’t hungover,” Jim indulged him “…but I thought you might like to hear a story while you’re feeling poorly. Shall I go on?”

“Yes please” said Freddie quietly.

“Ok, well, it was my 21st birthday, and I was in Carlow in Ireland – that’s where I come from” began Jim.

“I never would have known that….you know….from your accent” said Freddie sarcastically.

“Very funny” said Jim “don’t make me tickle you” he warned.

“Please don’t” wailed Freddie “I’ll be sick on you.”

“Lovely image, thank you Freddie. Stop interrupting. It was my 21st birthday, and all my uncles and cousins decided to make a man of me by buying me pint after pint of Guinness. Then just before we left the local, Mum decided to give a little speech. She gave me a shot of Baileys which I downed in one. I didn’t even get to the end of her speech before I chucked up the lot down Uncle Colin’s best and only suit. I must have had about fifteen pints, but I swear it was that Baileys. My sister was a little angel the next day. I was lying in my bed and she mopped my brow, and cleaned up after me. She was so worried.”

Freddie suddenly rolled over and vomited repeatedly into the bucket.
“Thanks for that Jim” he groaned.

“You’re very welcome sweetheart” said Jim wiping Freddie’s hair back from his brow.

Freddie laid back down on the sofa groaning loudly.

“I’ll just be a minute” said Jim standing up and taking the bucket out of the room. He returned several moments later with a clean bucket and a damp flannel.

Freddie was lying back down with his arm over his forehead.

Jim carefully lifted his hand to put the cool flannel on his forehead, when he noticed a ring of bruises around his wrist.

He wiped Freddie’s hair back with the cool flannel, and then balanced it refreshingly on his forehead.

“How did you get those bruises Freddie” Jim asked carefully.

Freddie examined his wrist.

“Oh, that’s nothing” he said dismissively “I bruise easily. Bill pulled me down off a table I was dancing on in Heaven” Freddie giggled “I don’t think he was very happy.”

“Bill doesn’t seem to be a very happy man” he said sourly.

“I’ll make him happy” said Freddie resolutely.

“Hmmmm” said Jim pulling Freddie’s blanket a little higher “just make sure he doesn’t make you sad sweetheart.”

There was silence for a couple of minutes.

“Jim?” said Freddie “Do you think Queen will make it big?” he stammered “It’s just that Bill said we were just a college band, and they never make it.”

Jim was dumbfounded.

“Has Bill ever heard you play sweetheart?” he asked gently.

“No.” said Freddie. “He’s coming to see us next time.”

“Well, from what I’ve seen I give you a year, maybe two, and I think you’ll be touring the globe. You’ve already had one offer - I know that business was unfortunate so I don’t want to rake over it – but if someone as big as EMI can see your potential, then it’s just a matter of time before someone equally as important snaps you up.”

“Jim? You know if we tour overseas, will you come with us?” Freddie asked.

Jim was silent for a moment. He allowed himself to imagine seeing the world beside Freddie.

His dreams didn’t even extend that far.

“There is nothing I would like more sweetheart, but I need to hang onto my job. If I don’t have this job, I can’t keep my flat, or stay in London” Jim reasoned.
“But theoretically, if you didn’t have your job, would you come with us?” Freddie continued.

“Well, if I didn’t have my job, there’s nothing I would like more honey. Back to what you were saying before though, I think there are only two things that would prevent Queen from world domination - if you don’t all stick together, and if you listen to sour pussies like Bill Reid!” said Jim.

Freddie giggled. “We’re going to succeed Jim. We’re going to be legends. I don’t think Brian likes me much at the moment though.” Freddie bit his lip.

Jim pulled his blanket up higher.

“Brian thinks the world of you sweetheart, but you need to think about what he has to be for you. He’s first and foremost your friend, but he also has to be your boss. He would like to be a great guitarist, and on top of all that he’s studying for his degree. I’m sure he would love to get a proper manager in for the band so he can get back to his passions – his music and his friends. He’s a good sort is Brian. You are all very lucky to have him.”

“I don’t think he feels lucky to have me” said Freddie sadly.

“Oh he does Freddie, but people grow up at different paces. He’s very responsible by nature, as is Deaky, and he’s trying to keep you and Roger in line” Jim chuckled.

Jim took a moment to think about Freddie’s level of maturity.

He was far younger than his years in every aspect of life - except sex. Sexually he was like a forty year old man, with the drive of a teenager.

“Why didn’t you pick up the list from the studio yesterday? I thought you would be chomping at the bit to start preparing your presentation” inquired Jim.

Freddie was quiet for a minute.

“I wanted to spend the day with Bill” he said unconvincingly.

Alarm bells rang for Jim.

Freddie was so determined for Queen to succeed that he ended his relationship with Paul Prenter for losing them the opportunity to go to America. Yet here he was, giving up the opportunity to get ahead of the competition for a reputable record deal, to spend the day drinking with Bill.

It didn’t track.

“Is that the only reason?” Jim asked gently.

Freddie was quiet.

“I did want to go. I asked Bill, and he wouldn’t come with me” said Freddie quietly.

“Is that because of his fight with Sean?” asked Jim.

“I don’t know...I think so” Freddie said tentatively.

“Why didn’t you ask me, I’d have come with you?” said Jim.

“Please don’t tell anyone I told you this, but I was cross with Bill, he’s my boyfriend, he’s supposed to come with me isn’t he?” Freddie was checking, as though not sure his behaviour was reasonable.
“Yes, he is darling. If you ask him to.” Jim wondered if maybe Bill didn’t understand how shy Freddie could be.

Perhaps that was all there was to it.

Jim stood. “Right, well I’ll tell you what. You stay here and sleep it off, and if Roger will help me, I’ll make it all go away – OK? When I get back this evening I’ll bring chips.”

“Urgh don’t mention food” Freddie started to gulp in air again.

“Believe me sweetheart by around three or four o’clock this afternoon you’re going to want hot salty chips really bad” Jim laughed.

“Jim? Why are you so good to me?” asked Freddie sincerely.

Because I love you. Because you’re worth it – even if you don’t think you are. Because I want you to spend your days singing and twirling. Because I want you to play drinking games with Roger until you both stagger home giggling in the early hours clutching onto each other. Because I want you to fall into my bed where I can make love to you until you scream my name, then I can hold you until morning, and keep you safe from those who want to use and abuse you.

Jim kissed Freddie’s forehead “Because you’re pretty. Now get some sleep.”

Jim headed up the stairs to see Roger.

“Knock, knock” he said poking his head around the door.

Roger was lying on his bed listening to some music and reading a car magazine.

“Oh hiya Jim. I didn’t even know you were here. Come on in” he said breezily.

“Rog, if I do you a favour, can you do one for me? Can you run down to the pub and ask to speak to Derek Green – make sure you speak to him directly – don’t leave a message, and tell him that I’ve got the shits and can’t get off the toilet, and he needs to call one of the lads to cover my shift.”

Roger raised his eyebrows.

“Then go and open up the stall. I’m gonna go to the studio and get the venue list for the auditions, then I’ll help you on the stall so you won’t lose a day’s pay. Sound like a deal?”

Roger nodded and jumped up off his bed.

“I know nothing about coats and hats, but I can serve the public, and operate a till.”

“Who are you mate – Jim’ll Fix it?!” joked Roger.
Although completely out of his depth, Jim had to admit that tending a stall on Kensington Market was rather a pleasant way to spend an afternoon, and he could see why it appealed to Roger and Freddie.

Everyone young, attractive, and desperate to be seen was here.

There wasn’t much money. That much was obvious, but that didn’t matter. Enthusiasm was high, and every single one of these kids were going on to better things.

Jim was outraged at the prices Freddie and Roger had the audacity to charge, but it paid the rent and kept them fed, and that was all that mattered.

Jim scratched his head and flicked through the stock list again.

“Rog, I can’t make head nor tail of this inventory. It says here we have these scarves, but they aren’t here?” Jim gestured to the display behind him.

“Over here mate” Roger pointed to the display of scarves, a plethora of purples and blues. How had he missed them?

“The numbers don’t add up” he said frowning.

“What numbers?” Jim showed the scrap of paper he was holding to Roger.

Roger laughed “Those correspond to colours – see?” he pointed at the list. “3,4,5 isn’t rack 345, it’s the colours; three is purple, four is pink and five is blue.” Roger gave a toothy grin. “Freddie codes in colours.”

Jim smiled warmly “Of course he does. Silly me….Rog, I don’t know how much use I’m going to be, I’m colour blind.”

The boys laughed out loud.

Jim wished Freddie was here. He would be in his element, and Jim would have liked to have watched him in action.

“I can just imagine Freddie here” said Jim to Roger with a smile. “Talking the ears off the customers, flattering them, and getting them to buy things they don’t need, and look ridiculous in.” Jim chuckled.

“Freddie? Nah, you got that wrong mate. Freddie doesn’t really talk to the customers. He’s a bit shy. He’s a clothes horse though. He doesn’t mind parading up and down Kensington High Street in the latest finery” Roger laughed.

“We have a good laugh on Saturday afternoon when we have another lad helping us. We show off, and the punters follow us back to the stall and spend big.”

Jim could imagine that. Two beauties – one dark and exotic, the other blond and angelic. What a sight they must be.

“Why is he like that?” asked Jim. “Why is he so shy? It’s at odds with his personality.”

Roger shrugged his shoulders “It’s just him. He’s just like that. Always has been since I met him. I suppose we’ve just got used to him.”
Jim patted his jacket pocket. “I’ve got the venue list for him. I’ll give it him later, he can tell Brian he fetched it.”

Roger rolled his eyes, but he was smiling “I wish you would give it him later. You haven’t shut up about him all day!”

Jim chuckled, but he felt his cheeks warming. “Sorry Rog.”

“I don’t mind really, I just wish you would act on it Jim! I’ve dropped him hints the size of the fucking iceberg that sunk the Titanic, but he just navigates around them. He needs to fuck Bill off.” Roger scowled “I’ve got a very bad feeling about him, he’s a loose cannon.”

Jim laughed out loud “That’s the pot calling the kettle isn’t it?! How many fights have I pulled you out of in the last few months?!”

Roger sniggered “Yeah, but I’m sane Jim.”

Jim laughed out loud “That’s a matter of opinion.”

Roger continued “It’s time Freddie had a good guy. The luck of the draw. If Brian calculated the odds scientifically surely Freddie is due a good guy. I honestly thought dating was hard, but the gay scene – my God!”

“No, it’s not easy.” Jim shook his head “People think that because homosexuality has been decriminalised that we’re out and proud. In many ways it’s more difficult to meet someone. Freddie and I are not criminals, and are not at risk of being arrested and jailed, but we still not widely accepted either. We’re forced into underground clubs, just to be ourselves, except it’s easier for predators now too. They can’t be charged criminally for gay related activities, and people like Freddie who love a bad boy are fair game. The law tolerates us, but won’t protect us if we are assaulted – like Freddie with Connors - so it’s up to us to police ourselves. Then we are seen as vigilantes. The gay community has been prohibited for so long that many people are breaking out and getting what they can. Promiscuity is rife, and distrust is contagious. It’s actually very difficult to have a meaningful relationship.”

“You chose a difficult path Jim” said Roger diplomatically. He had never really thought about it before. Freddie usually pulled somebody, and then regaled him with tales of enormous cocks, and that was the end of it.

“That’s just it though Rog – Freddie and I – we didn’t choose to be attracted to men. It’s our nature. Just like you are attracted to bad girls, I’m attracted to sweet men.”

Roger laughed out loud “Ha! Freddie sweet…he’s a pain in the arse, but you’re right he does love a bad boy.”

“Unfortunately for me” said Jim. I can’t be a bad boy for him. It’s not me, I couldn’t even begin to treat him the way he seems to like to be treated. I’d hang myself.”

“By the way” interrupted Roger “I’m more into sweet girls myself.”

Jim laughed “Case in point. They love a bad boy!”

They both laughed, and Jim started to feel that maybe him and Roger did have a shot at friendship after all.

He paused for a moment wondering how to ask the next question.
“Would you be alright about it then – if a miracle happened and Freddie and I got together?”

“I’d love it mate.” He clapped Jim on the back. “He deserves to be happy, and so do you. Freddie’s a handful. He’s a bloody genius, but he’s a handful. After what happened with Connors, I worry about him you know – even just if we’re out – but then with Prenter, who got one over all of us except you, and now Reid – there’s something very bad about him Jim. Watch him, I’m telling you.”

Jim watched as a young man sauntered over to the stall carrying two enormous steaming mugs.

Although Jim’s eye was immediately drawn, it took him a few moments to realise that it was Freddie. Despite his beautiful features still being obvious, Freddie looked like any other student here today.

He was dressed in denim and trainers, and his face was washed clean of make-up.

Jim took in his stature. He was so small without his platform boots. Jim could have put him in his pocket.

He looked washed out, but there was no disguising the warmth in his dazzling eyes.

Jim chuckled as he approached the stall.

“How are you feeling?”

Freddie whistled “Shocking” he smiled “don’t laugh at me though. Here…” he handed one coffee to Jim and one to Roger “…I got you these as a very small token of my appreciation.”

He reached up onto his tiptoes and pressed soft lips to Jim’s.

Staring intently into Jim’s eyes he said “Thank you darling. I really do appreciate everything you do for me. I haven’t forgotten that you saved my life the other night at Heaven, nor the first time we played The Tavern.”

It was dramatic, but so very sweet that Jim thought he might melt right here.

He pulled Freddie into a hug “Anytime you need me sweetheart” he released him. “oh, and speaking of …” he pulled the venue list out of his pocket. “Deliver that straight to Brian’s hands. You can even take the credit if Roger here doesn’t blow our secret.”

Roger shook his head, hands wrapped around his mug.

“Love that hat Rog” said Freddie referring to the soft bakers cap perched on his head.

“Right I’ll take this to Brian, and I’ll see you tonight.” Freddie gave a tired wave.

“I’ll bring chips” shouted Jim.

Freddie went pale. “Still not feeling good then?!” Jim chuckled.

The boys sat on the carpet in the middle of the living room floor surrounding a stack of hot heavily
salted chips.

Freddie was actually eating for a change.

Unfortunately Bill Reid was also in attendance, which nobody was happy about.

As he was Freddie’s boyfriend they had all agreed to be polite, but Bill appeared to be in a morose mood, and didn’t even have the grace to act happy to be there.

Roger was looking at the list “Bri, this is shit, we’ve been misled.” He screwed it up and launched it into the corner of the room.

“Great, can we go out now?” said Bill.

“I don’t think Freddie will be up for going out tonight Bill, he’s only just recovered” said Brian, and it was obvious to those who knew him that he was annoyed.

“Who are you - his Dad?” Bill snorted. “You’re coming out tonight Fred.” He said looking vaguely in Freddie’s direction.

Freddie looked dazed and reached for another chip.

Deaky retrieved the list from the corner and straightened it out.

“You’re looking at this all wrong Roger. It’s an opportunity. It’s better than we’ve had since….” Deaky looked at Freddie, then Bill “….we’ve had in a couple of weeks.”

“It’s a seaside talent contest Deaks!” scoffed Roger.

“If it a seaside talent contest Roger, we’ll wipe the floor with the opposition. They won’t be ready, we will. They won’t rehearse, we will.”

Freddie carefully tugged the list from Deaky’s hand and scanned it quickly “Look who’s in attendance” he shrieked “Arcadia, EMI, London Records, Parlophone, Charisma. My God!” Freddie jumped up and squealed.

This was the most enthusiastic he had been all day.

Bill slowly got to this feet “Great, can we go now?”

“Why don’t you piss off!” spat Roger.

Freddie turns to Bill, wrapped his arms around him, and kissed his cheek “Bill darling, this is very important to us. I won’t be much longer I promise.”

“You can’t seriously be going out again tonight Fred?” said Brian scornfully.

Freddie didn’t respond, he looked from Bill to Brian to Roger and sat down.

“It’s next weekend. Friday night in Southampton, and if we get through Saturday night in Portsmouth.”

“We’ll get through” interrupted Freddie. “I’ll wear my tightest costume. The white one” he said with a cheeky grin, while snuggling up to Bill and fluttering his eyelashes “You’ll like it honey” he purred.
Everyone groaned.

“I don’t need to see your cock again Fred” said Deaky.

Bill wrapped an arm possessively around Freddie “Nobody is seeing his cock” he kissed Freddie’s cheek and whispered not quite quietly enough in his ear “except for me”

Freddie appeared to light up.

“We need to stay in the same hotels as the music bods” said Roger. “After hours drinks, get to know them personally, make an impression.”

“Hmm definitely.” Brian was nodding.

“Deaky…can we afford it?” asked Brian.

“I’ll have to do some shifting around Brian, but I think the real question is can we afford not to?” said Deaky thoughtfully.

“You lot cannot be serious!” interrupted Bill “Do you actually think you’re going to make it big? With all the big names in showbiz right now?” he laughed out loud.

“Bill, would you mind fucking off” said Roger.

Brian completely ignored him, and carried on. “Right, we need to organise getting our gear down, including Fred’s piano. Roy has got the best amps. Freddie will you go down to the studio tomorrow and ask him about us picking them up on the way?”

Freddie bit his lip “Will you come with me?”

Brian nodded “After the debacle with the list, yes I will.”

“Fucking man up Freddie! You can’t scratch your arse without company” grumbled Bill.

Freddie gave him a hug.

Brian glared at him.

“I say we put some feelers out when we get there, find out where these people are drinking and staying, and then we move in too. Freddie and Roger, get us some good gear to wear, just don’t make us look like pillocks. Jim – what are you doing? Coming with?”

“I’m sorry lads, but no can do. Last time I went on tour with you I was threatened with the sack, and my boss doesn’t make idol threats.” Jim heart sunk through the floor.

“I hate your job” Freddie pouted.

“This is it boys, next weekend.”

Freddie jumped up with excitement.
Encounters: The Great Escape

Chapter Summary

Queen head of to Southampton for the first leg of their quest for a record deal – will they be successful?

Chapter Notes

Lovies – There are hints and clues throughout this chapter to what’s coming next....

I am sorry for the slow updates. My boss has realised that he doesn’t quite have all my attention and keeps setting me ‘homework’ – I wonder who will lose this particular battle of wills 😊😊

“Where the fuck is Freddie?!” snapped Brian popping his head out of the van.

“He’ll be here Bri, settle down, he won’t miss this for the world” assured Roger.

Brian waved his arms in frustration “Has he even packed? What about our costumes?”

“Already in the van.” Roger pointed to some holdalls, suit hangers and boxes.

“He packed everything last night before he went to sleep. Bill was pissed off with him because Fred wouldn’t stay over” Roger laughed, enjoying anything that irritated Bill.

“He left the bags on his bed this morning for me to bring down – even the hat box – God knows what he is going to pull out of that” Roger grinned.

“He’s a Virgo, he’s neat” Roger whispered to Jim, as though he needed more reasons to love Freddie.

“He went to visit Bill at 7 o’clock this morning. If he’s hungover he’s gonna be well fucked off when the doorbell rings.” Roger and Jim high fived.

Their friendship was finally cemented after working together at Kensington market.

Jim finally felt he could relax around Roger, knowing that should he ever win Freddie’s heart, that he had the blessing of his closest friend.

Roger felt he could trust Jim with his best friend, and there were few gay men he could say that about.
Just then Freddie ran around the corner, dragging a more reluctant Bill by the hand.

Jim nearly laughed out loud. Freddie was ecstatic, bright and full of life’s joy. Bill his mirror image, looking dismal and not quite sure what world he had been dragged into.

As he drew closer, Jim noticed the enormous dark bruise on Freddie’s neck.

Bill had marked his territory - just as Freddie was due to take his place on stage in front of his most important audience to date – marked, taken, owned.

Jim also noted Freddie’s very recent change in style.

He was again wearing trainers and jeans, but with a tight fitting jumper and enormous belt. He was yet to apply the make up Jim was used to seeing highlighting his most enchanting features.

He looked gorgeous, but again Jim was struck by his delicate stature and elfin features.

Was this Bill’s work?

Was he a man who owned and immediately changed his lovers?

Did he want Freddie to appear slighter, younger, softer?

Freddie was mercurial, his style changed by the hour, but always to draw the eye, to be seen, to stop conversation dead, never to blend into the background.

Roger laughed “See, I told you there was no way he would be late for this. He can’t wait.”

“Morning all you beautiful people” said Freddie with a beaming smile. “Today, we make history” he high fived Roger.

Freddie sat on the back on the van swinging his feet in an attempt to pull himself up.

“I packed everything you left me Fred, you don’t need to check” said Roger rolling his eyes at Jim in amusement.

“I’m just checking” Freddie called back muffled from under the pile of instrument cases.

“You returned” said Brian sarcastically popping up beside Freddie.

Freddie reached out a hand to Brian’s forehead “Are you ok Brimi? You look a little peaky” Freddie asked with concern.

“Honestly? I feel like shit Fred. I can’t shift this headache. It’s been a busy couple of weeks. I just need to get on the road” said Brian hurriedly.

“Just wait until you get that baby in your hands” Freddie gestured to the guitar case that contained the Red Special, Brian’s pride and joy.

“You’ll feel better darling. Playing your guitar for all those people. I meant to ask can we put White Queen on our set list? It’s been a while since we’ve done our solos?” asked Freddie diplomatically.

“Yes, it has. Let’s get on the road eh?”
Freddie gave Brian a quick hug.

Brian didn’t say anything else.

He knew that by choosing to perform the favourite of Brian’s compositions to date, Freddie was apologising for the stress Brian had been put under during the last few weeks.

He would never actually hear the words ‘I’m sorry Brian’ from Freddie’s lips, but this was enough.

Brian knew his friend could be tempestuous, and difficult to handle sometimes, but he also knew that underneath all that was the most genuine gentle heart he could ever hope to call his friend.

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Jim watched Freddie embrace Brian, and couldn’t help but smile.

Being in the middle, Jim had seen Brian’s stress, and Freddie’s pain at having been the cause of his concern.

After his chat with Freddie last week when he was hungover – which still made Jim smile – he knew that Freddie felt terrible for the effect his whirlwind love life had on those closest to him.

In a funny way things were starting to settle down.

Jim and Roger did whatever they could to wind Bill up, and Roger did what he could to promote Jim as an ideal boyfriend to Freddie.

Roger had insisted that Freddie and Bill’s relationship was doomed.

Jim could see no signs of that, and felt terrible that yet again he prayed that Freddie would be hurt by another lover.

Jim was also under orders – by Roger Taylor – that the minute the relationship splintered, he was to sweep in and claim Freddie for himself.

Jim wasn’t sure how he felt about being a rebound shag, but Roger had assured him that it was just the way that Freddie worked.

If he was down, he would look for the most efficient way to feel better – good sex. Jim had to be the source of fantastic sex, then he could interweave that dodgy love stuff if he wanted to.

Everything about the dynamic between this group of men made Jim smile.

Freddie was looking around for a way to climb down from the back of the high van.

Jim didn’t even think about Freddie’s partner standing beside him, before he reached up his arms to Freddie and swung him down onto the ground.

Freddie squeaked, and his face momentarily creased in pain.

“Sorry sweetheart, did I hurt you?” asked Jim frowning in concern.
Freddie shook his head and rubbed at his back “No. I backed into a bar the other day. It’s just a bit sore. It’ll be alright” he said quietly, looking tentatively at Bill.

Brian jumped down from the van and slammed the door shut.

“Oh, that’s us guys. We need to stop at the studio and get the two Vox amps from Roy, then on our way” he said with a bright smile.

Freddie gave Jim a big hug “Wish we were playing at Brighton. I never did get to go.”

“I’ll take you sweetheart, when you get back with your shiny new recording contract” promised Jim, patting his back gently.

Freddie launched himself at Bill pining him to the wall, and smothering his face and neck with kisses.

It didn’t do much to sweeten his mood, but who could blame him, he was going to be away from Freddie all weekend.

Jim knew how that felt.

Jim and Bill waved the boys off wishing them luck.

The van disappeared around the corner, and Jim went to get into his car.

Jim had never predicted that a time would come when he would resent his job.

How he wanted to be in that van with Freddie.

Bill had made the choice not to support his partner on tour. A perfectly missed opportunity for Jim to spend some quality time with Freddie in his preferred environment – the stage.

It was not lost on Jim that the only quality time he’d had with Freddie recently was when he was unwell, traumatised, or hungover. The caregiver, the rock, the saviour.

No wonder Freddie didn’t see Jim in the way he wanted him to.

Freddie liked adventure and fun and drama.

Dark clubs and bright lights.

The heady haze of sensory disorientation, too much alcohol and loud music.

It was time to take Freddie back into the environment in which Jim had first discovered him. Steal a kiss, and then makes his intentions clear.

Suddenly Jim became aware that Bill was blocking his path. “What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” Bill’s face with crumpled with aggression.

Jim was dumbfounded. It had been a while since anyone had spoken to him like that.
“Who the fuck do you think you’re talking too?” roared Jim.

“You. I can see what’s going on. Have you already been there, or do you just want to? You’re always hanging around him aren’t you. Touching him, getting an eyeful.” Bill jabbed Jim hard in the chest. “Back off. He’s mine.”

Jim smirked, ignoring the firm hand on his chest.

“You’d better get used to that pal, there’s not a gay man alive who doesn’t want to fuck little Freddie when he’s up on that stage.” Jim was deliberately winding Bill up, and he knew it. “He’ll be drowning in attention this weekend. I’m surprised you’re not going down there, marking him up properly, making sure everyone knows he’s got your name on him.”

Realising he had met his match, Bill released Jim, backing off.

A second later his finger was back in Jim’s face “If I fucking see you touch him again, if I see you sniffing round, I’ll fucking do you. Be warned!”

“I’m quivering” said Jim sarcastically, partially amused and getting into his car.

Roger was right. Bill was a loose cannon. He was a very angry man generally, and it disturbed Jim that he was so possessive of Freddie.

In Freddie’s line of work, he needed to be seen.

His supporting partner couldn’t be jealous of every bit of attention he received.

His career was founded on attention – Freddie the man, was an attention magnet - he would flounder if Bill gave his natural insecurities the opportunity to rise and overwhelm him.

Jim wondered if he should be more worried about Freddie than he was.

It had easily been a fortnight now. Bill’s feet were already far under Freddie’s table.

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Deaky blinked a couple of times to take in his surroundings.

Nothing like what they had been expecting.

The venue was tiny. Roger had been right in his first assessment – a seaside talent contest.

The facilities were shit too.

Deaky wouldn’t be able to set up nearly half of the equipment they had brought. Their sound would be a little tinny compared to the usual throaty amplification.

A few men had approached him earlier, and asked what he was doing. Deaky had thought he was in trouble at first, until he realised that they were genuinely interested, as they had never seen equipment like Queen’s before.

Weird to think that this morning they didn’t know these people. Deaky had mixed feelings.
Were the band making a good impression? Or were they being a nuisance – obvious in their quest to meet the right people, and commandeer their time.

Deaky could see Freddie chatting easily to an A and R representative across the table.

He was already dazzling in his ivory satin outfit. Deaky gasped to himself, mildly amused at Freddie’s audacity, and hoped no one spilt their drink on him.

Deaky admired Freddie.

Like himself, Deaky knew that Freddie did genuinely feel uncomfortable in new surroundings, and found it almost impossible to look new people in the eye, never mind make conversation.

He also seemed to possess an uncanny sixth sense of when, and who it was OK to drop his guard around, and be his charming self. The oddest place being on stage in front of hundreds of people.

It was almost as though Freddie could hide in the crowd that were staring directly at him, but when conversation needed to flow one on one, or between a small group, Freddie felt the need to hide himself, and almost couldn’t bare the intrusion.

Deaky didn’t share Freddie’s sixth sense, he found comfort in a good solid conversation with someone he liked, but still hung back behind Freddie on stage.

From time to time, he would really get into the zone and momentarily find himself and his bass guitar out front.

These moments were rare, but to Deaky were golden.

The man had introduced himself as Stan.

He had approached John earlier watching him add the amps and the lighting to the circuit.

Stan had been so impressed he had offered Deaky his card, and said if the rock and roll gig didn’t work out, he would like to speak with him about an electronic engineering position.

Perhaps that would be the safer option. He felt comfortable absorbed in circuitry and wiring. They didn’t require conversation.

Tonight’s performance seemed destined to fail. The room was tiny, the acoustics all wrong, the air too dry.

It was Freddie however who boosted all their spirits.

Freddie had learnt more than anyone expected from his Top of the Pops experience it seemed, and said they had to just go for it.

They were among a large number of acts. They could only play three tracks in the allotted time. They had chosen Ogre Battle, White Queen, and Lap of the Gods.

Pretend they were playing The Empire, Freddie had said in the moments before they stepped out on the stage. In fact no, pretend they were already playing the Rainbow at Finsbury Park.

Hit the back of the room he had said. Wake those fuckers up.
Stan Jefferson nodded his thanks to the barmaid as she dropped his drink on the table before him.

“Gin and tonic Sir” she said with a smile.

He thought for a moment she might curtsy.

They were all the same these kids – they all thought the flash of a company badge made you somebody.

Someone who could make their dreams come true.

He couldn’t make his own dreams come true.

He was pushing fifty, and he was still waiting for his bump up the ladder.

Year after year he attended these gigs on behalf of the company. He’d only found four bands worthy of being pushed forward in nearly twelve years, only one of which was still recording.

Maybe the big boys got the decent fodder.

The guys that got to visit music venues in places beginning with L – London, Liverpool, or Leeds.

Not us – not him and George – his crusty old colleague to whom he rolled his eyes as the lights dimmed.

We only got the power to visit these places.

He didn’t even have the power to choose a decent hotel.

“What the……” Stan paused as eerie sound whipped around the room and bounced off the walls. He couldn’t see anyone on stage…..but with a crash of chords the guitarist stepped forward.
Encounters: The Silence

Chapter Summary

After a very successful evening Freddie finds himself alone, and battling with his inner demons, which motivate him to make a questionable decision. Fears for Brian’s health dominate the evening. Will it be a success, or will they have to call the whole thing off, and return to London?

Chapter Notes

Not all music producers were nasty lovies – enjoy 😊

Freddie had kept people talking as long as he could, but it was no longer polite.

Brian and Deaky had already gone to bed, and Roger had met a girl after the show, and headed off into the night life of Southampton.

Freddie had declined Roger’s polite offer to join them.

He couldn’t be himself here.

He was sure there must have been a few gay bars in the area, but he didn’t know anyone, and he couldn’t ask Roger to give up a wondrous night for him.

If he had been at home, he would have invited the last remaining guest to a game of Scrabble, or played the piano until someone got up.

Nobody in the house knew his secret.

Freddie couldn’t sleep on his own.

Sometimes if Roger came home very late, or not at all, Freddie didn’t even go to bed.

Brian had booked them all single rooms. They had been reasonably priced, and the boys were going to be together all weekend, they needed a little space where they could get it.

Roger had dropped Freddie’s bags off in his room earlier in the day, when Freddie was figuring out who was who, and schmoozing with the record label folks.

Roger had forgotten to pack Freddie’s blanket.

It was rolled up next to his holdall, but Roger was probably so used to seeing it there, rolled up neatly on his bed every morning, that he possibly hadn’t even noticed it.

Freddie put the key in the lock and entered the room.
It was a nice room. Not decorated to Freddie’s taste, but it was clean and contained the essentials. It had an en suite toilet, and an old basin in the main bedroom.

Freddie walked over to the window and opened it. Gulping in the fresh air, already starting to feel a little hot.

He could hear the ocean, but he couldn’t see it.

It was better than the silence.

The odd car passed by adding to the movement and white noise that made Freddie feel a little less alone.

He couldn’t bring himself to undress. It made him feel unprepared, so he got under the cool sheets in his jeans and jumper.

He closed his eyes, and listened.

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Freddie first became aware of his heart beating too fast.

He could hear it vibrating in his own head.

He was sweating.

He couldn’t breathe.

He could hear footsteps outside in the corridor.

He held his breath, listening so hard, he felt he had gone deaf, then he heard the door shut in the room next to his.

He could feel bile rising up his throat, but couldn’t start to breathe again.

Realising he was going to be sick, he rushed out of bed over to the basin and began retching.

Nothing would come up.

He collapsed against the wall before running the cold tap, and putting his wrists underneath the cool flow.

When he felt he could move his legs again, he turned off the tap and moved over to the window gasping as he was now desperate for air, being unable to take enough into his lungs to stop himself from suffocating.

Freddie looked over at his alarm clock.

It was 3:15 am. Just twenty minutes since he had got into bed.
“Morning, it’s Stan. Yes, I’m having to be a bit quiet. Put my assistant on the phone? Thank you.”

“Yeah, Cassie. It’s Stan. Listen I’ve got a problem. I’ve got a God of rock half my age fast asleep in my bed hanging on to my little finger like a lifeline.”

“He knocked on my hotel room door just after 3am. I was so tired and drunk I can honestly say I didn’t understand a damn thing that was going on. My first thought was that he was high, I did ask him if he was tripping, but he said no. Just that he needed to hold my hand. Yes, I thought it was a wind up too. I thought he was one of them homosexuals like, thought he was hitting on me, but straight up he laid on my bed and was sound asleep in minutes. We didn’t even talk. Said he couldn’t bear to be alone.”

“Well I shouldn’t have let him in really, but it was late, and like I said I was so confused like. This kid’s an amazing performer I needed him to get some sleep so he’s on form for tonight.”

“Yes, he’s still here now. I didn’t sleep a wink, laid ramrod straight staring at the ceiling all night. Regretted it the minute I laid back down. I don’t want to wake him, I wouldn’t have a clue what to say. I dread to think what this is going to look like if he’s seen leaving my room.”

“No, he’s a really nice kid. Magic on stage just magic. Really progressive like. The band are hotshots too. Really conscientious like. Better than anything I’ve heard in these dives for ages.”

“All the best ones are weird – Bowie, Elton, a bit eccentric like. I’m sure he’d be great.”

“Well that’s what I was wondering. If I was to suggest that head office take a listen … and they like them … could we get him … like … a personal manager maybe? Somebody that can just … just be with him. He’s magic … magic … but something’s not right. He’s struggling to adjust. Maybe it’s his first time away from home. I don’t know … young … but old enough to drink.”

Freddie could hear the low rumble of voices.

Something told him not to open his eyes.

He could feel a light pressure on his fingertips.

Someone was holding his hand.

The voice grew a little louder as his memories of last night returned.

Freddie was mortified.

He needed to get out of here now.
He gently relaxed his hand, wriggling his fingers just slightly.

He felt movement on the bed, and the voice was moving away.

He could hear his own breath.

He tentatively opened one eye.

The man had gone into the bathroom.

As quietly as possible Freddie let himself out of the room.

He closed the door silently behind himself and turned to run.

He ran into an unseen obstacle, noticing a rush of blonde hair, as he practically knocked a young woman off her feet in his haste.

Freddie apologised, laughing a little, and pulled the woman to her feet.

He wrapped his arm around her shoulder and smiled a bright showman smile. "Gosh, I’m so clumsy. I’m sorry. Are you alright darling?"

The girl looked up into sparkling warm brown eyes, and her cheeks flushed pink.

“I’m fine thank you, please don’t worry.” She held out her hand “I’m Rachel” she smiled brightly. “…and you are?”

“Hi” Freddie brought the girl’s hand to his lips “I’m Freddie. You might have seen me perform last night with Queen?”

“Oh sorry” said Rachel, as though she had missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime “…I was at a wedding last night. I wish I could have seen you. What do you play?”

“I’m a singer” said Freddie blushing, “…and I play the piano.”

Roger sneaked out of the room door behind Freddie, shocked to see him.

Taking his opportunity Freddie pulled Roger into a faux choke hold “…and this is Roger, our drummer.”

Rachel looked as though she had just set eyes on a smorgasbord of desserts.

Freddie kissed her hand again “Have a wonderful day Rachel.”

He pulled Roger along, and turned around to give her a wave goodbye.

Roger could barely contain himself.

“Fred, who the fuck was that? She’s gorgeous!” shrieked Roger.

Freddie smiled conspiratorially “Well, you know darling, variety is the spice of life.”

Roger punched Freddie hard in the arm, before wrapping an arm around his throat “You dog!”
The boys gathered in the hotel restaurant for breakfast.

One eye on the notice board by reception.

They would know by 11am if they were through to the next round of the contest.

Roger piled his plate high with bacon and eggs. He had worked up an appetite.

Freddie sipped on his tea, nibbling delicately on some toast.

Deaky has a toasted muffin, but Brian couldn’t eat a thing.

“I feel shit lads. I was sick several times in the night. I only had a couple of beers last night as well” he said, feeling short changed.

Freddie put the back of his hand to Brian’s forehead. He frowned with concern.

“You’re very hot Brian. Are you going to be alright tonight darling?” asked Freddie. “I hate to say it, but do we need to go home?”

“I’ll be fine” said Brian resolutely. “I’ve got some Disprin in my room. I’ve taken some already, but I’ll have some more before we get on the road. If we get through, we’re performing lads. I won’t let you down.”

“Alright Bri…” said Deaky “…but I’m driving the van. You get some sleep.”

Brian nodded.

“If we get through, we need to line up a new set for tonight. Show our versatility” said Brian.

“We’ll get through” said Roger grinning with his mouth full.

“No” said Freddie “I agree, we do some new stuff, but if we impressed enough with last night’s set, we need to stick with what works, introducing a couple of new numbers. If we don’t drag them out we get time to do five tracks tonight. Let’s do two from last night, and three new tracks…what about Killer Queen?”

“I disagree Freddie” Brian shook his head. “We need to show we can be versatile, but Killer Queen? It’s not even recorded yet!”

“And we will Bri, but we need to stick with some of what got us noticed. People like familiarity, something they feel they are already attuned to.”

Freddie stopped talking when Stan Jefferson walked across to the hot buffet.

Stan stopped momentarily by their table. Freddie couldn’t meet his eye.

“Lads. Well done. I can’t officially say this yet, but make your way to Portsmouth for tonight. I’ve called in another colleague to judge. There’s going to be a lot more competition, bands from a lot of venues tonight, so be alert. Do that first one you did, it smacked me straight between the eye balls like. Good luck.”

Stan dramatically swept away from the table.
Freddie grin broadly “Told you they’d like Ogre Battle.”

“Yeah” shrieked Deaky totally out of character, and quickly looked back down at his muffin when people looked round.

Moments later the contest results were pinned to the notice board.

Queen were in first place.

As was usual, the band members all had their say, and Freddie won…Killer Queen it was.

They borrowed the now redundant function room from last night to practice the vocal harmonies.

It was a delicate little piece that was more about subtlety, than deafening and blinding their audience.

It was perfect to follow on from Ogre Battle, to demonstrate the bands range of capabilities, in a short sharp segment.

Brian was feeling shocking, and struggled to stand for more than five minutes at a time.

Freddie was very concerned, and once again asked if Brian would like to go home, but he was adamant.

“No. We’ll be home tomorrow, I can rest then. Besides it’s probably a stomach flu, I’ll be over it in 24 hours. Today is about the rest of our lives lads – our career – when I’ve seventy odd and running around a stage in….Vancouver … I will think about this day, and know we had to do everything to make it happen.”

Roger high fived him.

Roger was wearing a goofy grin.

“Rog….what?” asked Deaky.

“What?” said Roger smiling brighter.

“You? What are you smiling at?” Deaky was now smiling too.

“This” Roger looked down thumbing at the lacy table cloth in a rare moment of shyness “Us, all together, playing for our lives. No jobs, no university, no demented boyfriends” he poked Freddie in the ribs “Just us – together – doing what we were born to do.”

The boys pulled into a group hug.
Brian didn’t improve at all on the journey to Portsmouth.

Deaky drove, so Brian took the opportunity to lie down and get some rest – his head in Freddie’s lap, and his feet on Rogers.

Freddie stroked Brian’s hair back from his face, and opened the window a little wider.

“I’m really worried Rog. He’s not himself. What if he can’t play tonight? Do you think we should get him a doctor when we get to Portsmouth?” asked Freddie, face creased in concern.

“Nah, he’s a smart man Fred. He won’t risk his health. If he was genuinely worried, he’d insist on seeing a doctor himself” said Roger.

“I know Rog, but maybe he feels too poorly to know he needs a doctor. If I’m poorly I can’t do anything but lie down and feel miserable.”

Roger rolled his eyes “Yes, but you are a drama queen Fred” he smiled warmly at his friend. “If you were as unwell as Brian and you had a choice between a cuddle and a doctor – you choose the cuddle.”

Freddie nodded. “I really don’t like doctors Rog.” Despite Roger’s gentle teasing, Freddie was in earnest.

Freddie took the black nail polish out from the vanity case at his feet, and started to carefully apply it to the nails of his left hand.

A pact, something himself and his first love would do together.

Something that linked them, but remain undetected.

Undiscovered by anyone else.

If discussed at all, it was a fad, a fashion phase.

It was nice to have a moment…just to be.

The last two weeks had been a whirlwind with Bill, and Freddie had loved every moment of it.

It was nice to rest though, his own head was starting to ache.

He was tired, very tired.

Bill liked to be out in the clubs every night, and he liked Freddie on his arm.

Lately they had got into a spat nearly every evening because Bill wanted Freddie to stay over after they had sex.

Freddie didn’t like to sleep anywhere but in his own room with Roger.

Bill didn’t accept no, and the arguments were getting more intense.

He didn’t want Bill to know about the nightmares.

He didn’t think Bill would ever ask what they were about, but he knew Bill would tell him to man up and get over it.
Freddie didn’t even disturb Roger when he had a nightmare anymore.

He didn’t need to.

Just seeing Roger in his bed, sprawled out and drunkenly snoring was grounding enough.

He was home, safe in his bed, and if Roger could climb inside Freddie’s head and beat up the inner demons that still haunted him, he knew he would.

Freddie trusted Roger implicitly.

Roger had never asked what the nightmares were about.

Freddie’s mind drifted on to Jim.

He had told Jim that his ribs ached because he had fallen into a bar.

It was nearly true…he had fallen into a chest of drawers.

What he hadn’t mentioned was that Bill had pushed him.

He had then proceeded to tear his clothes off, damaging them in the process, before throwing him up on the wall for sex.

Freddie didn’t mind them a little rough, he quite liked how easily he could control Bill with sex, and he was always calmer afterwards.

Freddie had lately started to wish that Bill would be a little more tender sometimes.

He smiled to himself. Perhaps he was getting old.

Still, it was nice to have a couple of days rest from it.

He had a rifle through his vanity case, and found a bottle of white nail polish.

He uncapped the bottle and gently lifted Brian’s right hand, applying the polish to the nails much larger than his own while Brian slept.

When he had finished he blew on the polish. “There” he said to Roger “Brian is an angel”

“I suppose that makes you the devil” Roger said nodding to Freddie’s black left hand. Seconds later realisation came over him “Is that what you really think Fred?”

Freddie looked down at his lap. He couldn’t answer Roger.

Well – wasn’t he – the things he had allowed to happen.

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Portsmouth by comparison was happening.
The venue was much larger, the lights already in place, and the stage was the largest Queen had performed on to date.

Freddie whistled when he saw it for the first time, ping ponging between concern for how much harder he would need to work to fill it, and the sheer pleasure of having said task.

Tonight he would be larger than life.

He had sprayed on a sexy black satin number, and was circulating around the lounge greeting the visitors as though it was his home.

All their jobs had been easier tonight.

The venue managers had arranged the furniture, and put up posters announcing the competitors, and the judges.

Deaky had run a number of discreet sound checks with the amps already in place, and then added his own to make the sound so much richer.

Fred’s piano had been placed in the wings; the stage wide enough for it not to be in the way of the other acts until they played.

Queen were fifteenth on the stage.

It was going to be a very long night.

To make matters more complicated Brian wasn’t feeling any better, and for the last hour before the show Freddie had seated himself beside Brian’s bed; holding his hand, wiping his brow and feeding him sips of water through a straw.

He sang gently as though singing a lullaby to Brian, although he was actually running up and down scales preparing himself for the evening.

Brian had insisted that Roger take Freddie back downstairs to the bar, get him a little tipsy, and continue their task of wooing the VIP’s.

By some amazing feat, Brian himself rose from the bed and got himself ready.

He couldn’t face wearing the choker around his neck, or lacing his top up quite as tightly as usual, but like the rock star he is, he grabbed the red special and headed down to the lounge to join his friends.

Queen’s set got off to an amazing start.

As the night before, the opening bars to Ogre Battle got the attention of everyone in the room with the unique sound and power.

Killer Queen went down a treat, with the audience not having a clue how to receive it, but remaining silent, with all their attention towards the stage, bursting into rapturous applause at the end.

There was a scary moment during Doing Alright, when Freddie turned to notice that Brian was missing from his post, and saw he was throwing up in the wings, but right on time he ran back to the stage, and continued as though he had never been away.

True professionals.
As the boys came to the front of the stage to take their bow. The audience did a unique thing. They started to sing God Save the Queen to them.

Brian quickly caught on, and strumming his guitar picked up the main chords of the song and played along with them.

It was something he would work on later.

The boys came off the stage absolutely ecstatic. The evening couldn’t have gone better – Brian’s illness notwithstanding.

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Despite there being two more acts to follow, the band was consumed into a receptive crowd in the lounge.

The boys quickly lost each other as they were pulled into various conversations depending on their interest.

Brian desperately trying to choke down some iced water, and seek some minty chewing gum still feeling rather unwell. Although the adrenaline was doing a lot to help.

Freddie was flitting and flirting from one group to another. Seducing everyone in his path – male or female – with fluttering eyelashes, coy smiles, and handshakes.

They were handed a number of business cards, with a nod and wink by middle aged business men in suits.

Freddie felt a hand hook around his bicep, and he turned to see it was Stan.

Sheer joy and elation of the moment prevented him from feeling embarrassment quite as keenly, and Stan seemed to have forgotten the events of the previous night altogether.

Stan introduced Freddie to a slightly older man named George, and a man named Louis, with an arm around his shoulder.

Freddie did not recognise Louis from their table the previous night.

He gave Freddie a card and told him that he was very much looking forward to discussing business with the band.

Despite humiliation about the way he had behaved, Freddie had an innate trust in Stan, and thought they could have a fruitful business relationship – as long as the previous night could be expunged from history.

Just then Freddie was manhandled by an enormous man who resembled a bouncer, and escorted to join the rest of the band, who had also been rounded up.

They were led down a long corridor which was barely lit.

There were two men standing outdoor a door a little further ahead, and the boys were ushered passed them, and into the room.
The room appeared to be a lavish office.

Shiny claret leather sofas drew the eye, dark wooden shelving, an impressive fireplace, but it was a sturdy desk in the centre of the room that was the focus.

Behind the desk sat a portly gentleman in a bold blue suit. He was wearing a lot of gold jewellery, and smoking a cigar.

His whole demeanor spoke of wealth.

“Come on in boys take a seat” said the gentleman.

The boys couldn’t help but be impressed.

They rushed into the room, gasping at the opulent surroundings.

The walls were lined with books, and despite suddenly feeling considerably worse, Brian couldn’t help but run his fingers along the leather spines.

The gentleman looked at each of them and held out his hands “Welcome. To whom am I addressing?”

Brian recovered his manners and rushed forward holding out his hand “Brian May sir. This is Freddie, John and Roger.”

“Sit down” he gestured with a wave of his hand.

Freddie and John fell into the nearest sofa, Brian and Roger continued to stand.

“I am Jonathan Young, but please call me Johnny. Behind you are James and Steve, and my daughter Maria will be along with some refreshment.”

The boys looked at each other barely able to contain their excitement.

“Say, sorry to ambush you like that, but we don’t work like the other companies out there see. We see something we like, and we seize it, we make it ours. We like you. We see your potential, we like your style, but we only deal with rockers, so for us we want all rock music and you’ll do away with the other stuff” Johnny waved his hand dismissively.

“We do a variety of music Sir” started Brian. “We love the rock, but we also do from ballads to chic to classical and vaudeville. A medley really. It’s the basis of Queen’s appeal. Something for everyone.”

Johnny raised his hand.

“I think you misunderstand son. You boys will be very happy with us. We manage a handful of rock bands – mainly out of America – but we have the best ones here in the UK. Queen are best band material, but you’ll do as I say.”

Brian held out his hand towards Johnny “Thank you for your time Sir, if you would like to leave us a card, we’ll be in touch? We have a number of other offers to look though.”

Freddie and Deaky stood to leave.

“Say, I don’t think you understand son” Johnny took a long drag on his cigar. “This here is not a negotiation.”
The office door slammed behind them creating an echo, and the atmosphere turned to ice.

Freddie and Deaky jumped, and turned to look behind them, the two men in suits were standing inside the bolted door - feet wide, arms folded.

Freddie turned back to look at Johnny who was taking a slow deliberate drag on his cigar.

“Say doll, no need to be jumpy. We’re just going to have a little chat about getting you some representation see.”
Encounters: Keep Yourselves Alive

Chapter Summary

The Queen boys are locked in the office by the local mob for hard bargaining. Will they fold, and sign on the dotted line?

What is wrong with Brian?

Chapter Notes

Cor! High drama lovies!!!

Thank you for your support and your patience

Brian was always the smartest man in any room.

Today, he was the calmest.

By the end of the day Freddie, Roger and Deaky would never forget what he would do for them.

“Mr Young, This is against the law. We demand that you unlock the door and release us immediately” he said firmly, taking charge.

Freddie and Deaky made their way towards the door, but the two henchmen blocked their path.

Johnny waved his hand casually “Don’t take on so son. We’re just going to have a little chat until you see reason and sign my contract.”

He reached into his desk drawer, and placed some paperwork and a pen on the desk in front of Brian.

No one moved.

The room was silent.

Eventually, not taking his eyes from Johnny’s face, Brian rolled up the paperwork and popped it under his arm.

“We’ll review it” he said sharply turning to leave. “Now open the door. You can’t hold us here against our will.”

Johnny smirked, amused, but he did not make any move to let the boys leave.

Roger slammed both hands onto the desk making Freddie jump.

“Open the fucking door” he growled.
“You need to be reminded of who you are talking to young man.” Johnny glared at Roger.
“Remember your manners see.”

“I’m talking to a fucking criminal arse wipe now open the fucking door!” he growled.

“Rog” warned Freddie in a small voice.

Deaky was frozen solid in the middle of the room.

“Say Rog, even your little friend thinks you need to mind your manners.” Johnny turned to Freddie.

“What do you say princess is your big man Brian here going to sign my contract, or will you pay with your lives?”

Freddie couldn’t think, he couldn’t move.

“Cat got your tongue? You made enough noise out there.” Johnny gestured his thumb towards the corridor, and turned to Brian. “Bit of a delicate sort your singer hey, is he a poofter?”

Brian stood up straight and looked Johnny in the eye “Ay, shut up!” he snapped.

“Come on, let’s avoid all this boys, just sign the contract.”

Johnny forced the pen into Brian’s hand.

Brian unrolled the contract, uncurled it out on the table, and began reviewing the wording.

He was stalling, buying time while he thought about it.

Freddie ran across the room to Brian and knocked the pen from his hand. “No Brimi, we won’t let you do it” he shouted glaring at Johnny.

“Awwww Brimi, go on, sign it, your little friend here thinks we’re the right choice, don’t you honey?”

Freddie shook his head, but dropped his gaze.

Brian started to review the contract again.

“You can’t be serious Bri, come on!” growled Roger.

Freddie clutched onto Brian’s writing hand.

He was shocked at how cold Brian’s skin felt after being so hot with fever all weekend.

Brian pushed the contract across the desk and flung the pen down on top.

“This is not worth the paper it’s written on” said Brian firmly. “We’re under duress. I’m not signing it. Open the door.”

Freddie wound his finger into Brian’s belt loop as one of the henchmen stepped towards them.

The man strode passed them, and grabbed Roger who had worked out a way to get the window open when everyone’s attention had been on Brian.

The man turned to Johnny, who nodded once.
The man turned to the window and dragging Roger behind him, pushed it open.

In one fluid movement, the burly man wrapped an arm around Roger’s neck and bodily swung him out of the window. Dangling him by just the arm at his throat.

“Rogee” screamed Freddie breaking loose from Brian and running towards the window.

The other man caught Freddie, and lifted him off his feet aborting his attempt to get to Roger.

Freddie screamed with fear and frustration, biting hard at the man’s hand to release him, but he was too strong, and Freddie couldn’t even get his feet to the ground.

He watched helplessly as his best friend struggled to hang on for life.

Powerless to save the person closest to him in the world.

“Sign the contract” said Johnny firmly.

Brian picked up the pen and the contract “Ok, OK, I’ll sign it, please bring him in” said Brian hurriedly.

Johnny nodded towards the contract “Signature first.”

Brian scribbled his name on the dotted line, and crumpled onto the sofa as he watched Roger be dragged back in through the window furious, but thankfully unharmed.

The other man released Freddie, who ran straight to his friend, wrapping his arms around him, and ushering him over to the sofa holding onto him as tightly as possible. Not quite believing that Roger was still here, that he could still touch him.

Johnny rubbed his hands together “Good decision boys, good decision.”

Brian looked at each of his boys…..Deaky frozen in terror, Freddie weeping and gripping Roger, Roger a mixture of shock and fury.

He couldn’t do it.

He couldn’t let their lives be owed by this thug.

Brian felt terrible. He was shivering one minute, and sweating the next, and he didn’t think it was just the stress of the situation.

He was also feeling nauseous again, and desperately needed to go to the toilet.

He looked down at the pen still clutched in his right hand, but it didn’t even look like his hand.

He looked around at each of his boys once more, and made the bravest and hastiest decision he would ever make in his life.

He sat up straight, crossed his legs and looked Johnny in the eye.

He nodded towards the contract and said boldly “It’s worthless. I can’t sign shit. I gave signing rights away to our solicitor.”

There was a series of audible gasps.
“Brimi, what are you doing?” asked Freddie with a small voice.

“It would seem your lives aren’t worth much boys” said Johnny, but he did look a little uncomfortable.

“I mean it” said Brian a little louder. “You take that contract anywhere, it means nothing.”

Brian turned to face Freddie and Roger, and never wanted to see them look at him like that again.

Their faces swam before him.

“Prenter put me in touch with a few lads in the industry; people I signed with but never had to use – you know media executives, and the like. Among them was this gentleman” Brian produced a business card out of his wallet and handed it to Johnny. “Give him a call. I’m sure he’ll tell you exactly the same as I have. He can sign your contract, I can’t. I assure you he won’t sign anything without checking everything is above board. Think it will be?” Brian eyed Johnny with a fake cockiness.

“Brian, what are you doing?” Brian heard Deaky’s voice for the first time since they had entered the room.

“Henry James Beach - Legal Adviser” Johnny read out. “Why would I get a solicitor in here when I can just drop the lot of you out of the window? Who’s going to miss you?!” he shrugged.

“Fucking try it” growled Roger, jumping up and escaping Freddie’s grip.

Brian cocked an eyebrow at Johnny “You heard him - try it!” said Brian.

The deep patterned wall behind Johnny was undulating.

One of the henchmen grabbed for Deaky, but Freddie was faster.

His fist connected with the underside of the man’s nose, fracturing it on impact.

The man grabbed blindly at his face as his own blood flowed over his hands and onto the floor.

Freddie froze with the shock of his own actions, which gave the other man an advantage. He grabbed Freddie round the waist, lifting him off his feet and carrying him kicking and scratching like a wild cat towards the window.

In his panic, Freddie’s foot connected with Johnny’s face, knocking him across his own desk.

The other man having recovered somewhat, grabbed Deaky and dragged him over to join Freddie.

“Don’t you think this is all getting a bit stupid” said Brian calmly, though he felt anything but. “Call our solicitor.”

“It’s always the quiet ones” Johnny muttered to himself as he picked up the phone, and read out each number as he dialed.

A few minutes later, after a short conversation, Johnny turned to speak with Brian.

“It seems you’re in luck. Your Mr Beach’s secretary tells me that he is here at the hotel this weekend, working with another of the bands. I just have to dial his room.”

While Johnny was on the phone Brian turned to Freddie and Deaky, trying to reassure them with his
eyes.

Freddie had momentarily stopped struggling with the enormous brute that held him captive, and looked terrified.

Deaky was yet again frozen to spot.

Roger looked explosive.

Johnny hung up the phone.

“Say boys, what is it you hope to negotiate?” he asked smugly drumming his fingers on the desk.

“It’ll cost a few hundred to get you out of this signed contract. That would finish a new start like Queen right off.” He pointed to the paperwork on the desk.

“Why don’t we all remain friends, and ask your Mr Beach to kindly sign you to my label.” It wasn’t a request.

Roger launched himself at Freddie’s captor “Fucking get off him right now.” The man kept one arm tight around Freddie’s waist, and gripped Roger’s throat.

Both boys started to kick at the same time.

The man couldn’t hold them both in such a fury, and he fell to his knees.

Freddie tried to escape, but the man grabbed his leg, and pulled him onto the ground.

He scrambled to his feet when he felt himself suddenly released, and turned to see Roger furiously kicking him.

Freddie was torn between fear, and wanting to kick the man himself.

“Oh my God Brian!” shouted Deaky at a volume that no one knew he was capable of.

Everyone turned to look at Brian.

His head was lolling back on the sofa.

His face, his neck, his hands, and even the whites of his eyes were bright yellow.

Freddie screamed once, and fell silent.

For the first time since they entered the room, Johnny was unnerved.

He waved his hands towards the door and boomed “Get out! Get you, you’re freaks, get out!”

They didn’t have to be asked twice.

Freddie and Deaky pulled a limp and barely conscious Brian to his feet, wrapping his arms over their shoulders.

Roger ran behind them, stopping only to grab the signed contract off the desk.

They slammed the door and ran down the corridor as fast as they could while supporting a very unwell Brian.
A young man in a flamboyant suit and bowler hat was striding purposefully towards them.

“You must be Queen?” he asked “I hear you got yourself into a bit of trouble.”

He took in the boys – Brian barely standing, Deaky pale and shaking, Freddie weeping silently, and Roger flushed and covered with blood, and said “Goodness, come on.”

He ushered the boys out to the car park, unlocking the doors of his new Jaguar, he pushed them inside, tyres screeching as the car fishtailed out onto the road.

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As the car pulled onto the motorway towards London, Jim Beach drove at a steadier pace.

He looked into the rear view mirror at the boys in the back seat. It was the first time he had clapped eyes on them, as all business had been done on the telephone, or by correspondence.

First he saw Freddie, who was sitting in the middle, eyes unfocused, with tears streaming down his face.

Roger was cuddled up to Freddie’s side trying to pacify him, but Freddie would not loosen his grip on the arm of a much taller man to his left who was sweating profusely, and looked very unwell.

Jim turned to Deaky who was sitting in the passenger seat.

“I’m Jim Beach, your solicitor. I would say I’m very pleased to meet you, but I’m going to need filling in.”

Deaky took a loud calming breath and ran a hand through his hair. “I’ll do my best” he said blowing out through his teeth.

Deaky took his time bringing the solicitor up to date on the events of the day.

The contest, to the applause, to the promise of support and representation, to being rounded up by Johnny’s men, to the signed contract, to being threatened with losing their lives, and lastly with Brian being unwell.

“Yellow?” Jim repeated. “That’s jaundice, it’s his liver. Look, I’ll get you boys home to London, but we’re going straight to the hospital. I can’t emphasise how serious this is.”

Roger tapped Jim on the shoulder “I think this one needs to go as well” he said pointing to Freddie, who didn’t register that he was even being spoken about.

He didn’t register anything, he continued to weep silently, holding on to Brian.

Roger violently punched the back of Jim’s seat making everybody jump.

“Fuck!!” he roared “Our gear! The van. Fred’s piano, the fucking drums, the amps, Brian’s guitar. Fuck!!!”

“Ok, listen to me” said Jim quietly taking control. “We’re going to the hospital. From there I can make a few calls, arrange to get your gear packed up and returned to you in London. Then we get to work on getting you out of that contract you signed. Johnny Young is known in the area, he has clout, he has money, and a number of people in his back pocket.”
Roger grinned and pulled a crumpled piece of paper out of his own back pocket. “He doesn’t have Queen.”

Jim smiled into the rear view mirror. “Atta boy….Atta boy.”

Jim Beach drove the boys to the accident and emergency department of the Chelsea and Kensington hospital.

The minute they pulled up, a couple of nurses rushed out to the car with a gurney.

It seemed that sometime during the journey, Brian had slipped into a coma.

Freddie had not roused anyone.

Freddie did not speak at all.

He gripped tightly to Brian unable to stop weeping, and was gently pulled away by one of the nurses.

Brian looked like something from a nightmare as he was wheeled into the hospital – lifeless.

His dark curls splayed out in contrast to the white pillow on which he laid; white sheet pulled up to his chin.

The boys ran alongside him holding his hands as he was rushed through a series of louvered doors, and they were asked to wait outside when they approached the final door into the department.

No one spoke.

They each took a seat in the waiting room, slumped down in their own private hell waiting to hear some news.

Brian had saved their lives, now they must pray for his.

After a lengthy silence, Roger nudged Freddie “When we know Brian is alright, we’ll get someone to take a look at you.”

Freddie didn’t acknowledge Roger, he had stopped crying and was staring ahead.

After what felt like hours, a nurse came to ask the boys a number of questions about how Brian had been in the last few days, had he been at all confused, and who was his next of kin.

Shortly afterwards she invited the boys in to see Brian.

He was still in a coma.

He was lying flat on the bed, and there were tubes coming out from everywhere.

A monitor beeped consistently reassuring the boys that no matter how bad he looked, Brian was still with them in this world.
A doctor arrived, and explained that Brian had contracted hepatitis.

He was indeed gravely ill, and although reasonably stable, he wasn’t yet out of the woods.

He had suffered from severe sepsis, and despite a blood transfusion, would possibly lose his right arm.

The remaining blood drained from all of their faces.

Their beloved friend may get to keep his life, but he may never play his guitar again.

Roger wrapped both arms around Freddie sobbing onto his shoulder. “You were right Fred, we should have got him a doctor the minute we arrived in Portsmouth. You were right all along. I’m so sorry.”

Freddie didn’t respond. He didn’t speak, and perhaps most unusually he didn’t hug Roger back.

The heart monitor started to beat erratically, and nurses appeared apparently from nowhere to surround the bed.

The pillow was whipped out from under Brian’s head, and charges applied to his chest as the team began resuscitation.

Once the medical team were happy that Brian had been stabilised, they allowed the boys to sit by his bedside silently for the next few hours.

Brian’s parents rushed frantically into the room, relieved to see that in his hour of need, Brian had not been left alone.

They hugged each of the boys in turn, and Roger and Deaky let go of Brian’s hands, to allow his parents to approach the bed.

Nobody noticed Freddie slip silently from the room, and out of the hospital into the cool night air.

When Brian’s parents were settled beside him, and he could be more confident that Brian was safe, Roger turned to where Freddie had last been seen.

“Fred, come on, let’s get you checked out too.”

“Deaky” he said “…where’s Freddie?”
Encounters: The Wait

Chapter Summary

Jim catches up with the boys, and is astonished to hear about the events of their weekend, and the threat made to their lives.

Brian’s life hangs in the balance in the ICU, and Freddie …well ….just ….isn’t his adorable self 😞

Chapter Notes

Poor Baby! 😞😞

Jim whistled along with the radio as he steered his car towards home.

It had been an event less weekend.

He had worked every evening – which had done nothing to take his mind off Freddie – but at least he wasn’t sitting at home by himself.

Jim smiled as he thought about his work; there hadn’t been any drama, minimal fuss, and no fighting.

Jim had seen Jim Connors appear at the door of the bar on Friday evening, and immediately refused him entry.

He wasn’t sure how much support he would get from his boss for his actions, but when Freddie returned, Jim wanted him to be able to drink at The Market Tavern free from fear of retaliation.

Jim chuckled. He surmised that the lack of drama this weekend could have been due to Freddie’s absence from London.

The man seemed to spread intrigue in his wake – usually just by being himself.

Jim shook his head when he realised how utterly obsessed he had become with this man.

He couldn’t wait for the boys to return home tomorrow. He had missed them all.

He hoped they had achieved and experienced everything they dreamed of and more.

This could be a pivotal time for the band.

If they were discovered, and received the support they deserved, their rise to fame could be jet propelled.

Jim wondered momentarily what would happen to his and Freddie’s friendship if Freddie was suddenly on the road for months at a time.
That didn’t matter, because Jim had made a decision.

He was going to seize the day and tell him… no…scratch that….show Freddie how he felt.

Barrel roll the little damsel off his feet.

Give him no option.

Show him what he really wanted out of life.

Ok…back to reality….Jim would never be THAT bold, but he would take Freddie to Brighton on their next day off together.

It was the perfect spot – the gay capital – they could be themselves there.

Jim would ply Freddie with drink ….one or two cocktails anyway…that would be enough to make him tipsy, then kiss him breathless under the pier.

If Freddie was going to be a world famous rock star, he would leave London with Jim’s kiss on his lips, and the promise of someone to call home.

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Jim locked the car, and made his way up the path to the front door.

A silhouette caught his eye. Someone was sitting on the porch steps.

He should have been suspicious, should have called out to the trespasser to leave before he did them harm, but he didn’t, instead Jim was gripped with an eerie sense of alarm.

He observed the silhouette. It’s owner was small, with the outline of long hair.

A couple of steps nearer told him it was Freddie.

Jim’s heart lurched heavily in his chest. Had Freddie had the same realisation? Had he come here to tell Jim that he wanted more out of their relationship?

That was a pipe dream – wasn’t it?

“Welcome home wanderer!” Jim laughed with delight to be close to him again.

Jim stepped closer expecting Freddie to wrap him in an enormous hug, the way he did with all his friends - but nothing came.

Something was wrong.

“Freddie?” he said softly crouching in front of him. “What are you doing here? I wasn’t expecting you back until tomorrow.”

That eerie feeling intensified when Freddie didn’t respond.

In fact, Freddie didn’t even look at Jim, but instead stared off into the distance as though unaware
that another person was even there.

Jim tried to manoeuvre himself into Freddie’s eye line, taking Freddie’s hands in his.

His hands were as cold as ice.

Jim brought Freddie’s hands to his lips, blowing onto them, and rubbing them in his larger hands to warm them.

“Freddie sweetheart, what’s wrong? You’re scaring me.” Jim said softly.

Freddie gave no response.

Jim himself was silent for a moment or two.

He just stared at Freddie looking off into the distance.

He literally didn’t know what to do.

His first aid training came to mind, and he carefully ran his hands over Freddie’s head checking for injury.

There was no sign of injury.

He looked into Freddie’s eyes looking for signs of latent seizure, or force trauma.

Aside from the far away gaze, and the lack of sparkle, Freddie’s eyes were perfectly healthy.

He felt for the pulse at Freddie’s neck and wrist, the beat was a little fast, as was his breathing, but not enough to indicate injury or pain.

Jim gently inspected Freddie’s neck and throat. He couldn’t find any reason for him not to speak.

“Freddie, you’re literally scaring the shit out of me. Talk to me please!” he implored.

More silence.

“You hate being on your own - where are the others?” Jim looked around as though expecting the boys to jump out of the bushes and surprise him.

After another few moments silence, Jim made a decision, he wrapped an arm around Freddie’s shoulders and pulled him to his feet.

“Come on honey, I’m taking you to the doctor.”

Freddie pushed Jim away so forcefully that he would have fallen himself had Jim not caught his wrist.

Finally he met Jim’s eyes, but with such a strong look of disappointment and anger that Jim physically stepped back.

He threw his hands up in the air “Ok, OK, I won’t…I won’t, I promise, but I need more information darling. I can’t leave you like this, you need help of some kind. Can I take you home?”

Freddie allowed Jim to steer him down the path to his car.
Deaky and Roger slumped side by side on the sofa in their boxer shorts.

They didn’t speak for a very long time.

Finally Roger said “We’re finished Deaks. Queen…it’s over, we’re done. We can hope and pray for Brian to fully recover, but what if he’s never the same? He’s not just a guitarist, he’s a fucking wizard on the guitar.”

“He can still write music” said Deaky hopefully.

“Yeah, but will he want to?! He built that guitar from nuts and bolts, and ….shit with his Dad. It’s his life.”

Five minutes passed and neither of the boys spoke.

“How long should we leave it before we call the police? asked Deaky quietly.

“We won’t need to do that Deaks. Freddie’s….well…he’s not what you think. He’s a survivor. He’s never had his Mum and Dad around like we did. They dropped him off at boarding school when he was really little. He’s done everything for himself ever since. I know he has that little boy lost persona sometimes, but trust me when the going gets tough, Fred has a shell as tough as an almond. He won’t leave Brian either. He probably just needed a smoke, bet we missed him. He’ll probably be back sitting with Brian wondering where we are.”

“Do you think we should go and get him?” Deaky paused “I’ve never seen him fall apart like that before. He’s always so strong.”

“He’s not John…..” said Roger quietly, but Deaky interrupted him before he could continue.

“If anyone should be falling apart, it should be you, my God!”

“Yeah, but I hit things John. Freddie …he takes them in here” Roger tapped his head “…and you don’t see them again.”

The boys returned to silence.

The doorbell rang, and Roger reluctantly got up to answer it, wondering who on earth it could be at this time of the day who didn’t have a key.

Roger opened the door, and saw Jim’s outline against the night sky. Then his eyes dropped to a
smaller figure in front of him wrapped in an enormous coat.

“Freddie!!” Roger shrieked wrapping his arms around his friend.

He hadn’t said it out loud to Deaky, but he had been very worried.

Freddie wrapped his arms around Roger, and laid his head on Roger’s shoulder for a long time.

Eventually Roger became aware of Jim on the doorstep, and pulled back to allow Jim to enter the house.

“Sorry Jim, come on in”

Jim stepped into the hallway, gently pushing Freddie ahead of him.

“Where did you find him?” asked Roger one hand in his hair. “He left the hospital and didn’t say a word. We’ve been worried sick!”

“The hospital?” said Jim astonished “Is that where he should be?” Jim put a hand on Freddie’s shoulder, and turned to take him back out of the door.

“No, no, not Freddie” Roger waved them back in.

“He hasn’t said a word to me at all. He was on my doorstep when I arrived back from work. Just staring at me. Scared the shit out of me, I was hoping you could fill me in?” said Jim, nervous as to what Roger might say.

Freddie wandered down the hallway into the living room, and without acknowledging Deaky’s presence, perched on the window seat and stared down at his lap.

“What do you mean hasn’t said a word?” said Roger looking over at Freddie.

“I mean not a word, as in silent, mute. Aren’t you supposed to be in Portsmouth performing tonight?” asked Jim, still very confused and concerned.

Roger ushered Jim into the living room.

“Mate…..do you like Jack Daniels?”

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It turned out that neat bourbon was a good idea.

Jim thought that Freddie might be suffering from shock after the events of the day, and managed to persuade him to accept a shot.

Freddie sipped delicately at the fiery brown liquid, wrinkling his nose up at its strength.

Roger and Deaky piece by piece relayed their weekend to Jim.

How well Queen had performed, and that they had got through to the final of the contest.
How Brian had been so sick all weekend.

The events that led to them being locked in the office with Johnny Young and his thugs.

How Brian’s Incredible Hulk impression had finally got them released.

They told him about their first meeting with their solicitor, and how considered, studious Brian had turned into a superhero when faced with the mob.

They also described how each of them had been used as pawns by Johnny to get Brian to sign the contract.

“Christ! You must have played well” said Jim sarcastically, eyes growing wider with every new detail, and fuming inside at everything these hopeful young artists had been subjected to.

Not for the first time since knowing Freddie, Jim wished he was a different kind of man.

His concern for Brian was as palpable as his bafflement over Freddie’s silence.

Although deep in conversation with Roger and Deaky, Jim’s attention was on Freddie.

He had longed to sit beside him, to hold him, to tell him that he was safe, but the look in his eye held Jim at a distance.

Freddie sat quietly throughout the whole tale, didn’t contribute, agree, or deny.

The Freddie that Jim knew would have dined out on this story for weeks.

Freddie sat at the window seat, as though he was in an unknown place waiting for a bus.

He was still wearing his stage costume, but with Jim’s jacket around his shoulders making him look smaller than ever.

The look in his eyes was far away. Not horrified like the night he had broken down in Jim’s car, but blank, vacant, as though he couldn’t quite choose which line of thought to focus on - so he looked through them all.

Jim was observing the smallest changes in his expressions, and body language.

Jim’s eyes wandered down to Freddie’s throat.

He couldn’t see bruising, or any signs of pain.

Freddie appeared to be functioning as normal.

He was breathing calmly, he had accepted a drink when offered, and didn’t appear to struggle with a throat injury.

He was blinking occasionally.

He had even left the room at one point presumably to go to the toilet, but he didn’t say a word.

Not one word.

The Freddie that Jim knew thought it the height of rudeness not to say please or thank you.

Jim couldn’t believe the danger that Brian’s life had been in for the past few weeks either.
Nobody seemed to know where he could have got hepatitis from, although everyone agreed that there had been subtle signs along the way that Brian wasn’t well - mainly in his temperament - but they had all assumed he was just tired and stressed with resuming management of the band after Prenter had been fired.

After a period of silence, Jim seized the white elephant.

“So, what’s wrong with this one?” he said, getting up and crouching down in front of Freddie.

“I mean aside from the horror of being held against his will, thinking he was going to lose you all, and then his own life?” Jim rolled his eyes at his own insensitivity.

He put a hand to Freddie’s forehead, he was still a little clammy.

“Has Freddie ever suffered from seizures?” Jim asked carefully, raising one eyelid and looking into his eye.

Roger and Deaky looked at each other concerned and shook their heads “I don’t think so. Should we take him back to the hospital?”

Jim shook his head. “I’ve already tried that one. He reacted aggressively.”

He trailed his hand down Freddie’s cheekbone. Freddie tilted his head into Jim’s touch, and closed his eyes.

There it was – contact – communication.

Jim had been unsure how to reach Freddie since his arrival home.

Unsure if it was OK to be close, not sure where to sit, not sure if he could touch.

Jim stood, and sat down beside Freddie on the window seat, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and pulling him towards him.

“Come on darling. Tell me how you’re doing hey?” he pleaded.

After a few moments of silence, and concerned looks from Roger and Deaky, Jim slowly trailed his hand over Freddie’s throat.

“And you say nobody touched his throat area?” Jim asked.

“Is that sore?” he asked Freddie directly, who gave no indication of recognition that he was being spoken to.

Freddie stared at his hands that were clasped in his lap.

“He got into a few scuffles, but I was hung out of a window by my throat and I’m still talking” Roger leaned his head back to show Jim the bruising around his neck.

Jim’s jaw hung open.

“Rog, just out of interest how many floors up were we?” asked Deaky.

“I dunno, I had my eyes shut you moron!” snapped Roger rolling his eyes.

“It could be shock” said Jim grappling for a diagnosis.
“Is that serious?” said Roger.

“It can be, but it needn’t be. Put the kettle on please?” said Jim rubbing his hands together. “Sweet tea. We need to warm him up.”

Perhaps there was something he could do after all.

Jim popped upstairs and came back down with Freddie’s blanket. When he returned, Freddie was alone in the living room staring out of the window.

Jim carefully wrapped the blanket around his shoulders, but Freddie was startled and whipped around quickly as though to attack Jim.

Roger re-entered the room with a tea tray.

“Shall we take him to the doctor?” Roger suggested again, worried for his friend. “There might be something physically wrong with his throat?”

“I don’t think so” said Jim. “He’s breathing easily, and he can swallow.”

“I’ve had an idea” said Deaky, picking up Brian’s note book and pen, and pushing them onto Freddie’s lap.

“Write it down Fred.” Deaky said proud of his genius moment.

Freddie’s eyes flashed with anger, he threw the book down on the floor, and stormed from the room.

“I’ll take that as a no then” said Deaky baffled, and a little embarrassed.

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Freddie was sitting at the top of the stairs when Jim caught up with him.

He ruffled Freddie’s hair as he walked passed and disappeared into the bathroom to run a bath.

Jim rummaged through the cupboard for anything that would make bubbles.

Not easy to obtain in a house full of men.

He considered going down to the kitchen for the Fairy Liquid, but when he turned to do just that Freddie appeared behind him.

Freddie reached up into the cupboard above Jim’s head and pulled down a bottle of Miss Matey bubble bath and handed it to Jim. In spite of the gravity of the situation Jim laughed out loud. That had to be a gag.

He quietened when Freddie didn’t even raise a smile, but couldn’t keep the warmth out of his eyes as he poured the candy pink liquid into the flow.

As the bath filled, Jim thought about that interaction with Freddie.

He had observed Jim, worked out what Jim was looking for and located it for him.
There was nothing wrong with his brain, his motor skills, or his balance, and just as the night Freddie had broken down in the car, Jim began to think whatever was ailing Freddie must be emotional.

Jim ran his fingers through the water to check the temperature.

It was a little on the hot side but Freddie was shivering.

When Jim straightened up, he was surprised to see that Freddie was sitting on the toilet lid with his knees pulled up to his chin.

Despite making no attempt at conversation, Freddie didn’t want to be alone.

Jim turned to Freddie, and rolled his jacket down Freddie’s shoulders, pulling it off.

He then reached up into the cupboard and pulled out a large fluffy towel.

“Come on sweetheart. Get in the bath while it’s hot” he said.

Freddie looked down at his clothing, and then at Jim.

Jim suddenly felt very uncomfortable.

He had dreamed of many a bathroom situation with Freddie.

Peeling him out of his second skin costume, having his wicked way, and then climbing into the bath tub with him to wash every inch of his skin.

His dreams were nothing like the reality.

“Honey, it’s OK” Jim said softly. “I just want to get you warm, I won’t look at you, I promise. Just get under the bubbles?”

Freddie seemed to understand what Jim was saying, and started to pull his arms out of the sleeves of his costume.

He turned his back to Jim, and then sat back down on the toilet lid when he had stripped as far as his waist. Eyes staring down into his lap.

Jim couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

This was the Freddie, who teased and tempted males and females alike from the stage.

The same man who fucked strangers senseless in public bathrooms.

The man who had brazenly seduced Jim into doing what he did on the sofa just a few months ago.

The very man who was so shy is his hour of need he couldn’t remove his clothes and get in the bath.

Jim froze for a moment as realisation came over him, he would have to get in the bath with Freddie.

Casually Jim started to remove his own clothing.

He had never been comfortable undressing in front of people. He at least preferred it to be dark.

He was far from comfortable now, but he needed Freddie to be warm, and if he had to be naked to get Freddie in the bath then that is what he would do.
Jim removed the last of his clothing and handed Freddie the towel to cover himself while he got undressed.

Jim stepped into the hot swirly water. It was heavenly, a little hot, but Jim felt himself relax the minute he got in.

Freddie shyly popped his clothes on the sink, and holding the towel with one hand, took hold of Jim’s outstretched hand with the other.

Jim had never seen Freddie so unsure of anything. He looked like he wanted to run, his eyes were darting in every direction except Jim’s.

Jim was trying not to look, but at the same time was examining Freddie for injury.

He could see a large dark bruise on his rib cage, but it looked to be older than just the last few hours.

Nothing else was apparent .

Freddie sat down onto his knees in the bubbles. He didn’t seem to know where he was.

Reaching out to him, Jim turned him around, and pulled him back between his legs, settling Freddie against his chest.

Jim held him close for a few minutes but didn’t speak, giving Freddie the opportunity to relax in the hot water, but also to observe the silence.

Some people couldn’t bear silence, perhaps Freddie would be tempted to fill it, but he said nothing.

Jim took a sponge from the bath rack that lay across the bath.

He pushed the sponge under the water until it was soaked and then squeezed the warm water over Freddie’s chest and shoulders.

Jim began to speak. “Tomorrow – if you would like to – I’ll take you to see Brian at the hospital. I’d like to see him myself, but it’s up to you, if you would prefer to stay home and rest just say the word.”

When Freddie remained silent, Jim continued to speak to him.

“We should have known he wasn’t well shouldn’t we? He was so grumpy when you were hungover….oh sorry no…I forgot, you weren’t hungover were you - you were poorly. I bet he was poorly too, all along but he’s being looked after now sweetheart so it’s time to get you well too. He’ll be all bossy again when he comes home, you’ll see.”

Freddie and Jim relaxed in the water in silence for some time.

From time to time Jim looked over Freddie’s shoulder, hopeful that he would close his eyes and get some rest, but they remained open and staring ahead.

Jim soaked up the bubbles in the sponge once more and squeezed the hot soothing water over Freddie’s chest.

“Thank you Freddie.” He said softly “Thank you for coming to me.”
Wrapped in just a towel, Jim stuck his head around Roger’s door, but the room was in darkness.

“Rog, Rog” he whispered hoping Roger wasn’t fully asleep. He needed to get some clean clothes for Freddie.

Freddie pushed passed Jim and walked into the room. He opened the drawer, pulled out his kimono, dropped his towel to the floor, wrapped the kimono around himself, tying it at the waist, before turning around and walking back out of the room.

Jim was dumbfounded.

Freddie was his perfectly functioning self, capable of everything it would seem…but speech.

His voice – the one thing his livelihood depended on.

As he made fresh tea, Jim wondered if Freddie was actively choosing not to speak, but that did not make sense.

Freddie wasn’t acting aggressively, or annoyed with any of them, and he was seeking out Jim’s company, despite not making any conversation.

Jim sat down on the sofa beside Freddie, putting the tea tray down on the coffee table.

Freddie was shaking with cold again, but made no attempt to wrap himself up despite his blanket being on the window seat.

Jim got up and re-arranged the cushions on the sofa, adding a few more from the two chairs that were also in the room. He made a cosy well in them for Freddie before gently pushing him down into it.

Jim wrapped Freddie’s blanket tightly around him, and said “Just a moment” before leaving the room.

Jim knocked on Deaky’s door this time. Deaky was still awake, and reading one of Brian’s books.

“Sorry to bother you” said Jim “Can I borrow Brian’s quilt please? Freddie is freezing, and I thought it might be nice for him to have something of Brian’s to wrap up in.”

Deaky pointed to Brian’s bed. “Help yourself mate. It’s actually clean. You know Brian, he washed and ironed it before we went away, so it would be nice when he got home. Some use…” Deaky’s voice trailed away. A few minutes later he pointed to the airing cupboard. “His winter blanket is in there, that might be nice for Freddie too.”

Arms full of linen, Jim thanked Deaky and turned to head back down the stairs.

“Jim?” said Deaky. Jim turned back to him “You really love Freddie don’t you?”

Feeling the blush creep across his cheeks Jim nodded “Yes, I really do.”

Jim re-entered the living room and was pleased to see that Freddie was still comfortable where he had left him.
He arranged Brian’s quilt over Freddie, before lying down beside him, and shaking Brian’s blanket out over them both.

Shuffling up, he pulled Freddie into his arms, burying one hand in his hair, and holding him securely against his chest.

For the time being, Jim did not dare to think of what might have been.

All that could be heard was the ticking of the clock, and Freddie’s soft even breaths.

“It’s going to be quiet now for a little while Freddie, so I will hear you if you want to tell me anything.”

Freddie stayed silent and stared ahead.

After a few moments Jim felt soft fingers lightly squeeze his arm. He squeezed Freddie tightly in reply. “You are safe, now Freddie” he whispered “This is our little space. Just us.”

Quietly Jim began to talk.

He talked about everything that came into his head, pausing in the spaces that Freddie would normally talk.

When he didn’t, Jim continued.

Jim talked about the concerts he had missed in Southampton and Portsmouth.

The people Freddie had met – only the good ones.

The places in the world that Queen could tour.

Jim’s time growing up in Ireland.

His school, his family, his first gay experience, his first straight experience.

Morning came around, and Freddie still hadn’t closed his eyes.
Encounters: In Only Three Weeks

Chapter Summary

With Brian in hospital, and Freddie unable to speak, the royal household returns to some semblance of normality, but what does it spell for the band when two of their most loved members are out of action?

Chapter Notes

Have you ever been around someone that cannot speak as a result of trauma? It’s bloody terrifying!

This chapter is a little different lovelies. It’s narrated from the viewpoint of a fly on the wall. As always you know where I am if you want to chat. Enjoy! 😊

It was the quietest three weeks the Queen boys had ever endured.

Brian’s absence was notable in the lack of structure; nobody to tell the boys when rehearsal was, when they could get into the studio, or any gig opportunities that might come their way.

The absence of the sound of strings was palpable, although the silence had been unexpectedly filled by Freddie’s incessant piano playing.

He had barely stopped to rest since the delivery company had returned the van with all the boys’ belongings a couple of days after they fled from Portsmouth.

Jim Beach who had never verbally spoken to the man, was nearly knocked off his feet when Freddie rushed from the sofa and threw his arms around him as his piano was re-situated in the living room.

Freddie then promptly ignored everyone, and thumped out one dramatic melody after another.

When the playing continued long into the night, the boys were glad it hadn’t been Roger who had been similarly afflicted.

For a silent man, Freddie could achieve an incredible volume.

The boys’ personal belongings had been in the van, as they had thankfully not yet checked into a hotel before the Portsmouth gig.

Their costumes, clothes, textbooks, Freddie’s enormous vanity case, and Roger’s lucky sweatbands were all in the van, for which they were eternally grateful.

When the boys were relaxing a couple of evenings later, Freddie - who still had not spoken a word- took out his nail polish and sat beside each of them one by one, and painted their nails.

They were too glad of him interacting with them to complain.
First he painted Jim’s nails white, then Deaky had white with the exception of one finger on each hand which was painted black, Roger had the alternate colour on each nail.

Freddie painted his own all black.

When Freddie left the room, Roger flashed his harlequin nails at Jim, laughing he said that Jim needed to get a few black ones if he was going to get Freddie into his bed.

Jim was more concerned about removing it before work.

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Brian had returned to consciousness and was improving one small step at a time.

Much like Freddie, he was prone to staring into space, and when he did go to the effort of making conversation, it was followed by bouts of exhaustion and depression.

Patiently the boys had explained Brian’s illness to him, peeling back the events that had taken place slowly and painfully, as Brian became well enough to hear.

He was lucky to be alive, and would make a full recovery, but progress would be slow.

He knew this, and was grateful for everyday that came, but was impatient with his fatigued body and felt he was a burden.

In his humble Brian way, he had thanked everyone for their help that day, and apologised for the stress his illness had put on the boys and his parents, who were of course simply relieved and overjoyed to have him back safely.

The boys visited around the clock, getting in the way of the ICU staff, who were relieved when he was well enough to go onto the ward.

It had taken some time for the boys to encourage Freddie to visit Brian in hospital.

Freddie became agitated and even angry at their insistence. No one could understand why, given how distressed Freddie had been when the nurse had made him let go of Brian when he was admitted to A & E.

Jim eventually surmised it must be because of his dislike of hospitals, and gently coaxed him there, promising that he wouldn’t leave his side.

Once there, Freddie was never away.

Both Freddie and Brian seemed to lighten once they had been reunited.

Brian recovered his enthusiasm for song writing, and Freddie would sit beside him scribbling out what he didn’t like, and tapping his pencil on his lap to count in Brian’s humming.

Freddie seemed oddly contented when he was busy, and despite Jim’s initial reservations about him going back out into the world without the ability to ask for help, Freddie blended silently into his usual patterns.
Freddie had not spoken a word since they had made their escape from Portsmouth.

It wasn’t easy to manage.

Each and every member of the royal household ranged from tears to anger in their dealings with Freddie, but it was only ever out of their helplessness and concern for him.

For one so quiet, Freddie’s presence in the house was deafening.

His enormous charisma brightening their home in his indefinable style.

He was communicating in his own small way, for those willing to slow and quieten, and only when Freddie allowed himself to be read.

He was still in the habit of keeping his eyes to the ground, and struggled with people staring more than ever, as they looked for his response carefully.

Jim regularly watched Freddie’s eyes - usually so expressive - waiting for the light to return.

He was sure he caught glimpses, although the strongest emotions were anger and frustration.

Sometimes Freddie found the intrusion unbearable, and with a slam of the door he would leave the room.

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One afternoon Roger came home from Kensington Market with a box of newly acquired scarves for Freddie to sort into colours.

It was an enormous pleasure for Freddie to touch the different fabrics, and Jim could see the warmth in his eyes return - if momentarily.

He held a couple of the scarves up to his face to feel the texture.

The next morning Freddie came downstairs dressed for his job at the Market.

Roger was mildly annoyed.

He thought it ridiculous that Freddie thought he could work with the public if he wasn’t going to speak, but when Roger left the house, Freddie went alongside him.

Jim was very concerned because Freddie was barely eating, and seemed sick and nauseous most days.

Jim didn’t know how he wasn’t passing out.

Freddie seemed to be powered by an alternative force.

When Freddie and Roger returned home that afternoon, Roger had concluded that nothing was really all that different.

Freddie didn’t normally make much conversation with the customers anyway, and Roger had given
him a little red whistle that he wore on a string around his neck. Whenever a customer needed assistance, Freddie blew on the whistle for Roger.

He earned his keep that day by changing into a different outfit every hour, and by the end of the day takings were up.

It was obvious to everyone that he was in a great deal of distress, but he wouldn’t allow them to get Doctor Atkinson for him.

Jim feared a complete breakdown.

He was unsure what effect any further knocks to Freddie’s confidence may have.

Freddie just needed the misfortune to bump into the likes of Jim Connors, totally unable to ask for help; but Freddie was a grown man and no one could tell him what to do.

Jim would remain close, lovingly soothing, and in his usual post to pick up the pieces.

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Jim had secretly visited Doctor Atkinson himself.

He had taken one of Roger’s biology text books that he had been reading during quiet periods at work.

The book contained a very small section on mutism; a condition that in very rare cases was brought about by extreme trauma, and can cause some people to withdraw so far that they cannot begin to express what is inside them.

The theory was very new.

There was next to nothing in the college library.

Roger and Deaky had become frustrated because Brian always knew what to do in these cases.

When he was well enough, they had told Brian about Freddie’s condition.

Brian had insisted on them bringing some text books into the hospital for him to look through in case they had missed anything.

When he too found there was nothing he could do to help, Brian became morose and frustrated.

He desperately wanted to see Freddie for himself, who at that time wasn’t ready.

The doctor had never seen such a case, and believed Freddie’s silence more probably to be due to something physical.

It wasn’t uncommon for people who feared the doctor to tolerate immense pain and suffering instead of facing their fear.

As there was nothing he could do without Freddie’s permission, Doctor Atkinson had asked Jim to persuade Freddie to let him look inside his mouth for signs of swelling, and if he would not, to
monitor Freddie carefully to see if he was making any sound at all – a laugh, a sneeze, a loud sigh.

He was not.

Roger had sarcastically asked Bill if Freddie was making any sound in the throes of passion.

He was bluntly told to fuck off.

Jim surmised things were not going well in that department either, that said Freddie did spend every night at home, sometimes to his delight curled up tightly to him on the sofa.

Doctor Atkinson did call at the house, and the occupants wished he had not.

Freddie became violent like a cornered animal, throwing things at the doctor, and anyone who tried to touch him.

It broke Jim’s heart, but he had to restrain him for his own protection and everyone else’s.

Unfortunately Deaky’s parents were visiting at the time, and while they love Freddie, and wished him well, they had insisted that Deaky move back home with them for a short while.

As he was yet to turn 21, Deaky had little choice but to accept their wishes.

That didn’t stopped him from visiting Brian at the hospital, and the boys at home every day.

The doctor had explained that Freddie’s aggression was more than likely caused by him being terribly frustrated at not being able to express himself, and not being heard when he had refused to see him.

Especially as he was artist, and verbal expression was his life.

The doctor couldn’t help Freddie unless he allowed him to.

His life was not in danger, and he was an adult, so he couldn’t be forced to accept medical help, no matter how much he may need it.

The doctor wished the boys luck.

Some people became extremely frustrated with Freddie, and could be really quite intolerant to the point of cruel.

Roger had been driven to tears. He just wanted his best friend to be well again, and had never experienced a situation where he couldn’t help Freddie before.

Jim had come home from work the day after the boys had returned from Portsmouth, to find Bill Reid violently shaking Freddie, and had been forced to intervene.

Despite wanting to violently shake the man himself, Jim had calmly explained to Bill that while no one understood why Freddie wasn’t speaking, that his condition had happened in a violent, stressful environment, and it was highly doubtful that he could be shook out of it.
Bill had conceded that having a boyfriend who couldn’t argue back had it’s good points, and continued to take Freddie out clubbing as though nothing had changed.

One night Freddie hadn’t returned home by the time Jim finished his shift.

Knowing that Freddie liked to sleep at home, and his blanket was still on the sofa, Jim had raised the alarm, and him and Roger had gone out looking for Freddie in the car.

Luckily they found him close to home.

Bill told them the next day that Freddie had been sulking in the club, and had taken off without telling him.

It was a club they didn’t visit very often, and Freddie didn’t know how to get home.

He couldn’t ask for directions, and couldn’t call a cab.

Roger landed a good punch to Bill’s jawline before Jim could restrain him, and Freddie had become upset and ran upstairs.

Freddie didn’t appear to register any surprise at all at being treated in this way by Bill.

Had Freddie not been registering so little generally, Jim may have worried why Freddie thought this behaviour from his lover was acceptable.

Freddie had given no indication as to his relationship with his parents, but Jim had suggested it might be a comfort to Freddie to have them round for tea.

Freddie had looked horrified, shook his head, and left the room.

Roy and Sean had come around to collect the amps that the band had borrowed for the contest.

Sean proved himself to be a fair weather friend, and made fun of Freddie.

Talking to the others in the group in front of him as though he was deaf, and blind, as well as mute.

Roy took a completely different attitude.

He had worked with Freddie for about eighteen months, he knew the man was very professional and far from stupid.

Although Roy didn’t expect a response from Freddie directly, he spoke to the group at large about their plans to start work on a new album.

Freddie, Roy, Deaky and Jim spent a very pleasant sunny afternoon catching up and drinking tea.

Freddie became quite excited, and went upstairs to get his sketch pad and started to draw some new characters for the album sleeve.

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Despite no vocal exchange, Freddie and Roger were as close as ever, and in some instances Freddie
expressed playfulness.

Roger brought down Freddie’s watercolours one day in the hope that Freddie would pick up his art again.

He drew for a while and then started to flick paint at Roger.

Roger thought he had upset Freddie, as Deaky had done with the notepad, so was a little nervous, but then Freddie ridiculously threw his crayons too, and a play fight had ensued.

Freddie blew his whistle every time Roger left the room. He couldn’t even go to the toilet, and Jim caught on that Freddie was trying to express amusement, when he saw Roger appear red and flustered at the door every five minutes, and Freddie just shrug his shoulders.

At some point, Freddie decided that Roger needed a night out.

He came downstairs dressed to kill….tastefully of course….and took his friend by the hand out of the front door, and they didn’t return until very late.

Roger was inebriated and had to be supported by Freddie who was still silent and sober as a judge.

After putting Roger to bed, Freddie had flopped down onto the sofa next to Jim holding his hands out for his blanket as if to say his work was done for the day.

Freddie for the main, was content.

His needs were met, but there were so few of them on the surface, and often much like the first night, he would sit and stare into space.

No one dare touch the pain that was so transparent under the very thin layer of tranquility.

His house mates were terrified to upset him, to push him further away from them, and into the darkness.

He drew attention with a gentle hand on someone’s arm, or with a shake of the head.

Sometimes he was much like a ghost, drifting from room to room.

Most of the time with the benevolence and humour of Casper the friendly ghost, with the occasional poltergeist act thrown in.

Doors, and teacups were frequently in danger if Freddie felt frustrated or unheard.

There were signs of things improving though, and day by day Freddie became a little less skittish, a little less jumpy when someone unexpectedly touched him, and raised voices didn’t automatically draw his shoulders up.

In only three weeks, the door bell rang, Freddie didn’t jump, or run upstairs, and Brian arrived home.
Encounters: Within

Chapter Summary

Things begin to look up for the boys after Brian returns home, and they are handed the opportunity of a lifetime.
Will Freddie recover his treasured voice, and seize the day?

Chapter Notes

Lovies we know how Jim feels about Freddie…but how does Freddie feel about Jim?

Freddie snuggled closer to Jim. His place at night now on the sofa was so familiar.

His mind slowed here.

Not enough to sleep, but it was the smallest relief. External stimuli becoming more encapsulating than the incessant noise inside his head – warmth, rhythm, breath, scent.

Jim rolled onto his side pulling Freddie closer. An arm around his waist, squeezing tighter, making him feel secure.

Another hand appeared in his hair, stroking softly and rhythmically.
Sometimes that hand would creep lower, and repeatedly smooth the skin from his temple to his cheekbone.
With every night that passed spent in this way, his mind would slow further.
Freddie couldn’t fully remember the events that had brought him to this point.
He assumed that he had been unwell, everyone treated him as though he was unwell.
Everybody also treated him like he was an idiot.
He had been furious when the Doctor Atkinson had appeared in the doorway.
Why did anyone think a doctor could help him?
Didn’t they realise that he had been patched up a million times, and nothing had ever made him whole?
It was a frustrating waste of time.
Not to mention the night after night of memory induced nightmares he was then forced to endure.
He thought he had always known that Brian was unwell.
Jim, Roger and Deaky had gone on and on about him visiting Brian, as though it would magically heal them both.

Freddie had assumed it was his fault, something he had done to put Brian at risk.

Brian was so sensible, he never took risks, his demise must be down to someone close to him.

Someone who trailed drama and injury in his wake.

Someone like Freddie.

He remembered longing to see Brian, to tell him that he was sorry, but he didn’t dare face him.

He remembered Jim’s face appearing in front of him, telling him that it was OK, that they wouldn’t make him stay at the hospital, that he could visit Brian and then Jim would bring him home.

He must have been very sick if they thought he needed to stay.

It had all changed when he finally saw Brian.

The noisy machines and bustle of the hospital staff had been overwhelming - and that smell - that ever present smell.

He had turned back a couple of times, but every way he turned he ended up in Jim’s embrace, who gently swept him on wards.

It became bearable the minute he saw Brian’s eyes.

Brian unexpectedly had been thrilled to see him.

Brian had told Roger that seeing Freddie had completed a puzzle for him.

That even though he knew all the boys had escaped Johnny’s clutches, and were relatively safe and well, it was the physical presence of the final member of the team that confirmed it for him.

He didn’t seem to mind that Freddie didn’t speak.

He had enveloped him in a huge hug.

Brian had treated him like royalty, like he had deigned to visit, like Brian was the one who was honoured.

Brian didn’t treat him like he was unwell, perhaps it was down to his own relative poor health.

From that day forward when he wasn’t at the market, or playing his piano, Freddie would be beside Brian until he was well enough to come home.

Brian had a stroke of genius when in hospital.

He had written down the details of a very powerful and poignant dream. Which with a little tapping and scribbling from Freddie had become song lyrics.

Brian had called it The Prophet Song. He couldn’t wait to strum the riff.

He said that the song had to be sung as a warning, and that the voice would need to be strong and rough, and urgent - nothing like his own soft, rhythmical voice at all.
People needed to stop and listen.

Brian had said that he wanted to hear Freddie sing The Prophet Song. That he should try and strike just the right note.

Freddie had tried, but it didn’t make sense.

The words were there.

He had read them a million times. He had seen the images they created in his mind’s eye. He had licked his lips, and swallowed a few times, but something was missing.

A link.

Something between the words, the pictures, and the sound.

Brian had smiled and asked Freddie to bring his guitar next time he visited, and they would try again.

That like all Queen projects, it would start small and then come together a little at a time and become something entirely different.

Brian had told Freddie that in his mind, he had heard Freddie giggle and say that he would bring the piano too.

It was the first smile Brian had been treated to.

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Freddie had started snatching sleep, not enough, but periods of blankness.

No dreams.

A blank canvas and silence, before the whir of loud wind, the flapping of wings or the beating of a heart – he wasn’t sure which - and the red eyes that appeared in the dark figures just as he awoke.

As time passed, it was tinged with something else.

His cheekbone softly pressed to a hard muscled chest, his arm clutching to a large bicep. Large hands running up and down the soft skin of his back.

He pressed himself closer, inhaling deeply, and felt the first stirrings of arousal.

He hooked one leg over Jim’s hip - simultaneously pulling him closer - but holding back just enough that Jim couldn’t feel his erection.

Perhaps there were other needs he had been neglecting.

He didn’t know how he would communicate that to Bill.

Bill didn’t like Freddie to be dominate in the bedroom, and with his inability to tell Bill what he needed, it would inevitably resort to violence – probably from Freddie such was his frustration.

It wasn’t Bill that was on his mind though, it was Jim’s boyfriend.
There must be one somewhere.

A man like this couldn’t be single.

Freddie had never seen him with anyone – even in the clubs – but there must be one.

Someone utterly gorgeous somewhere.

Freddie wondered how that person would feel knowing their partner hadn’t been home for the last three weeks because they were wrapped around another man every night.

That would be a hard limit for Freddie.

He was possessive.

He would need a man like this all to himself.

In fact, he couldn’t hold onto a man like this.

Freddie would never be enough – no, he would be far too much - he would be a burden in the first day.

Jim’s partner was probably exceptionally nice.

A nice enough person to let this wonderful man look after an imbecile – a charity case - that couldn’t even get words out of his own mouth.

Freddie could just imagine that conversation between Jim and his partner happening calmly over a cup of tea.

Freddie wondered if Jim’s partner noticed he rarely drank coffee anymore.

If Freddie had a man like Jim, he wouldn’t let him go for an hour, never mind three weeks.

More fool that person… more fool him.

Freddie was feeling more aroused with every touch, every stroke, it wasn’t going away. It was a tricky situation.

He may need to visit the bathroom to resolve it, but he couldn’t bring himself to move from the warmth of Jim’s body.

His steady heartbeat.

His strong hold.

Freddie would stay here forever if he could.

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Jim felt movement, the gentlest change in atmosphere that brought him just out of sleep.

He didn’t sleep very deeply these days.
Always on edge waiting for the slightest change in Freddie’s body – a movement, a sound, any sign that something was wrong, and he needed Jim’s help.

Ever hopeful that he would be awoken by Freddie’s sweet soft voice.

He pulled Freddie’s blanket a little higher over his shoulder, and was met with the fragrance of African violets – the fabric softener that Freddie must lovingly wash his blanket in.

Jim was trapped at the junction between heaven and hell.

For the last three weeks he’s had the pleasure of Freddie intermittently in his arms.

There had been some nights, just after he had stopped speaking, when Freddie didn’t come to bed at all.

Those nights, Jim would wake through the night often to the sound of the piano.

Other times he would see Freddie sitting on the window seat just looking out.

On occasion he had awoken to see Freddie’s silhouette hovering over him, followed by the warmth and fragrance of African violets as Freddie selflessly covered Jim with his blanket.

As the number of speechless days increased, Jim would awaken to find Freddie curled up on the sofa using Jim’s feet as a pillow.

When that had happened Jim would gently uncurl him, and lie him down beside him on the sofa where he could wrap his blanket over the pair of them. That was a challenge as Freddie slept very lightly, and Jim did not want to disturb the little sleep he got.

At some point this became the norm to Freddie, as now when he needed rest he would just climb in beside Jim.

His body was always pressed close, touching at almost every point but one.

For Jim this was torment.

Some nights Freddie would just wear shorts, and Jim would hold him close feeling his warm soft skin against almost every area of his body.

Although Roger asked Jim for Freddie updates every morning, Jim hadn’t mentioned this problem to Roger.

He knew what Roger would tell him to do, and he couldn’t do it.

As much as Jim detested Bill Reid, he was Freddie’s partner, and Jim would expect that same respect if Freddie was his.

No. Jim wanted all of Freddie, not a share of him.

Jim also couldn’t start anything until he was confident that Freddie could communicate what he wanted.

What if he didn’t want Jim in that way?

Would Freddie react with force, if he couldn’t say no?
What would that do to the trust Freddie had built in Jim?

Jim couldn’t bear the humiliation.

Roger didn’t ask where Freddie slept, and Jim didn’t tell.

Freddie rolled over and wrapped his leg over Jim’s hip, and Jim felt the immediate blood rush.

It would be so simple.

So easy to run his hand down Freddie’s back.

Push his body hard into Jim.

Jim wouldn’t have to say anything.

His need would be obvious.

He was stuck.

He couldn’t do anything, but lie awake for another night.

He was too aroused to rest, so he held Freddie close, caressing him, and hoping that one day he would come to him – speak to him, hold him closer, or push the final part of his body to Jim.

Jim wouldn’t hesitate.

So he waited - hovering between heaven and hell.

Freddie struggled awake to find he couldn’t move at all.

His eyes were open staring at the ceiling.

He had forced his way to consciousness before the dream sucked him back under – to fear and pain and powerlessness.

Suddenly those emotions were too loud, and he realised he couldn’t keep returning here.

He couldn’t bear it.

This couldn’t be his life.

His escape would be terrifying, but not nearly as terrifying as remaining here every night for the rest of his life.

*Freddie slowly raised his head and faced the black hooded figure appearing to manifest from the trunk of a tree.*

*The enormous bats swooped down pecking, and swiping at him with the beat of their sharp leathery*
wings.

*He faced the red eyes, terrified, and whispered 'no'.*

*He could hear screaming in his head.*

*Then he was moving.*

*Then lightness, then air.*

He became aware of gentle hands stroking his face, a soft whisper shushing him.

“You’ve found your voice honey” the whisper said.

Freddie’s found words forming in his head, but they did not connect with his lips, or his vocal chords.

No, he hadn’t.

His voice would never come again.

He would never sing again.

He would never stand on that stage, and sing into the blackness and the guide of a spotlight.

He turned towards the muscled chest, breathed in the scent of the man that was becoming so familiar to him, and began to cry.

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“Dislocate your spine, if you don’t sign he said, I’ll have you seeing double.” Deaky was reading from Freddie’s note book, which he had uncharacteristically left open on the piano top.

“Work my fingers to my bones, I scream with pain, and still make no impression” he continued.

Roger snorted “Bloody hell Fred, real light.”

He was talking to himself, as Freddie was upstairs having a shower.

“That is dark” said Jim concerned. “Do you think we’ve missed the point?”

“What do you mean – that something other than being locked in a room with the fucking mafia and having his life threatened is going on in there?” said Roger sarcastically tapping his own head.

“You’re both missing the point” said Deaky softly.

He picked up Freddie’s song book again, nodding. “If he can write lyrics, he can write what he wants to say to us.”

Jim and Roger’s eyes were wide as realisation hit.

A memory came back to Jim.
“There’s nothing wrong with his voice” he said quietly, as though he shouldn’t be sharing a secret.

“He was crying out in his sleep last night. His voice definitely works. It’s the first time I’ve heard it, but do you think….is it possible….he’s getting better?” Jim asked hopefully.

“He should have seen the fucking doctor weeks ago. Honestly, he doesn’t know what’s good for him” snapped Roger.

The boys quickly changed the subject when Freddie wondered back into the room, and sat down at the piano, and started to play a melody they hadn’t heard before.

“Is Brian out walking again this morning? I know the doctor said he needed to walk each day to recover the strength in his legs, but he pushes himself too hard. He’s as stubborn as this one” said Roger nodding towards Freddie.

Freddie angrily slammed the piano lid down making everyone jump, but he didn’t run off like he had so often recently, instead he perched himself delicately on Jim’s chair arm.

“He’s gone to see Roy” explained Deaky. “He felt he owed him an apology for not returning the amps when he said he would.” Deaky rolled his eyes “You know – it was all Brian’s fault - obviously” he said sarcastically.

Brian came running down the path waving at the boys through the window, more animated than they had seen in months.

He crashed into the room.

“Lads” he looked around “I know we’re a million miles from being ready, and I know that you might feel a bit apprehensive after our last fiasco, but…” Brian looked at Freddie.

“Fucks sake, spit it out Bri” snapped Roger.

“We’ve been offered the opportunity to pitch to John Reid Enterprises – as in Elton John’s manager – at Jimmy’s in Brighton, a week today!”

“Brighton?” the voice was so quiet, so squeaky, and so rough from lack of use.

Roger launched himself from the arm of his chair, rugby tackling Freddie to the ground in an enormous hug.

Jim laughed out loud. “Yes, Freddie, Brighton.”
Encounters: Brighton Rock

Chapter Summary

The band have a much deserved seaside break at Brighton before they perform for John Reid Enterprises.
Jim enjoys part of the day much more than he expected to.
Freddie is still not quite his usual chatty self, but is that the only fly in the ointment?

Chapter Notes

Who here wanted to rugby tackle Freddie to the ground along with Roger when he spoke for the first time lovies? 😊

His danced was of sheer unbridled joy.
It warmed Jim from the inside to watch.
If he had known the effect a day at the seaside would have on Freddie, he would have brought him to Brighton weeks ago.
Jim knew Freddie wouldn’t be magically healed by a fresh breeze and salty air, but if it gave him a moment of levity, Jim would bring him every day for a month.
The drive had been interesting.
Freddie had been seated between Roger and Bill, and Jim had hoped he wouldn’t be faced with the stress of separating them physically if either of their tempers flared.
To be fair, they all needed some time away.
Brian was still recovering.
Roger was in danger of dementing Bill if he continued to punch him at the rate he had since first meeting him.
Jim understood Roger’s motivation, although he saw things a little differently.
Roger was convinced that Bill was dangerous for Freddie, whereas Jim thought he was a arrogant pesky little upstart.
An arrogant pesky little upstart who had Freddie.
The world looked a little different to Jim than it had the night he found Freddie on his doorstep.
If the last month could replay itself with the knowledge he had now, Jim wondered if he would play his part differently.
To watch Freddie slowly come back to life under gentle patience and persistence had been nothing short of a miracle.

To watch his faith in those closest to him re-emerge, and to be counted among in those lucky men.

Jim was still fearful of Freddie sliding back into the silence.

He had been around too long to believe that people simply recovered from the depth of pain that Freddie had been forced to.

He was concerned that they didn’t have the medical backing he would have liked – when to press, when to retreat, when to support, when to stand back.

In spite of this, all the signs were positive, and Jim couldn’t give Freddie enough merit for his strength and courage in pulling himself up, and getting back into the hum of life - even before he could speak for himself.

Freddie’s bravery spoke for him.

Looking back on the last month, Jim wishes he’d had a fraction of Freddie’s bravery.

Three whole weeks - 21 nights - of holding Freddie while he slept all but naked, and not acting on his feelings.

Jim was ashamed.

Jim was acting like the younger of the two.

He cast his mind back to the first night he had spent on the sofa with Freddie, just talking to him, letting him know that he was not alone.

Using the rhythm of his voice to be calming, comforting; white noise for Freddie to use to drown out the bad.

He wondered now if he had played this all wrong.

If he should have made the ultimate din; grabbed Freddie’s attention, given him something to hold on to, something to pull him through.

Jim should have told Freddie he loved him.

Instead, he had kept quiet, showing his love in every soft touch and act of support, using every tool in the box to draw Freddie’s words from him, while ferociously withholding his own.

Opportunities he had missed to make love to him. Guarding his passion like a dirty secret.

Disappearing for long cold showers to deal with the consequences, just to be turned on again when Freddie innocently sat in his lap seeking comfort five minutes later.

Jim desperately needed some cooling air.

If Bill was at risk of a haematoma, then Jim was definitely due a coronary.

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The wind whipped up Freddie’s hair, and an unsuspected wave crashed over his ankles causing him to squeal and run from the sea.

Jim was thoroughly enamoured.

With not a thought in his head, he ran to him, throwing him up into the air and swinging him around. Freddie laughed loudly, the wind taking away the sound.

Jim slid Freddie slowly down his body as he lowered his feet to the sand.

Their lips met passionately, uncontrolled – seeking, discovering, hands grasping for more.

Jim pulled Freddie closer, as tight to his body as was physically possible. He would have climbed inside Freddie if he could, and he hoped he wasn’t hurting him too much.

As they pulled apart breathing hard, Jim heard Bill call to Freddie from under the pier.

Freddie looked up at Jim with enormous eyes, peeping through his hair. He bit his bottom lip, smiled softly as though he had just discovered hidden treasure, and then he was off and running towards the sound of Bill calling.

Jim bent over, hands to his knees to recover his breath. He couldn’t help but laugh out loud. Freddie was the one that was meant to be breathless - not him.

Holding onto Freddie was like trying to nail a blancmange to the ceiling.

My god that kiss had stoked the fire. So much passion inside that tiny little body.

Jim wondered how he contained it.

He slowly trudged his way up the soft sand and crossed the road to where the rest of the group were waiting.

Bill was giving Freddie a piggy back as his feet were too wet for his clogs, but he didn’t look happy about it.

Freddie stuck his tongue out at Jim with a wink.

The little minx.

Jim was reminded of a night in the club all that time ago when Freddie would dare him to kiss him, then fuck other men in the bathroom.

The game was still on. Jim didn’t feel that he had kicked too many goals, but at least he wasn’t out.

“Happy little day, Jimmy went away. Met his little Jenny on a public holiday. A happy pair they made, so decorously laid, neath the gay illuminations all along the promenade.”

“What’s that Fred?” asked Brian. “I don’t think I’ve heard that before?”

Freddie looked at Jim coyly from beneath his hair “Made it up…about two people falling in love under Brighton Pier” he smiled softly.
It had been a slow build up to this day.

Neither Brian or Freddie were ready for it, but neither could let the opportunity pass.

Brian was surprisingly healing quicker than Freddie, and although he needed to have regular rest periods throughout the day, he was slowly taking back the reins of the business.

Freddie sang better than he talked.

He built the strength back into his voice practicing Flick of the Wrist, and Prophet Song over and over again, but still spoke reluctantly and briefly.

His inherent shyness almost made it more difficult than when he couldn’t speak at all.

At least then it was categoric – Freddie didn’t speak – there were no questions raised. Whereas now that people in the industry knew speech was a problem for Freddie, they tended to focus on it, adding to his inhibitions.

Speaking made Freddie tired, and at home they encouraged him, but never forced him.

He had never spoken about his mutism, or it’s causes.

That didn’t stop him using it to get attention from the boys.

The first time Freddie had asked Brian if he would like a cup of tea, Brian had given him a hug.

Freddie expected this treatment now every time he spoke. If he didn’t receive it, he would speak less and less until he won the affection he wanted, smiling brightly when his victim gave in.

Jim couldn’t stop rewarding him – not in the way he would have liked to reward him – but he would bring him cups of tea and glasses of wine by the hour, just to be rewarded with a shy smile and a thank you.

By the end of the day, the piano top would be a sea of cups and glasses.

Freddie pointed to an area on the beach, unfortunately his hand collided with Bill’s ear.

“Fuck Freddie! Knock me out why don’t you.” Bill dropped Freddie to his feet unceremoniously.

“What are you pointing at?”

Freddie pointed to the beach again and tugged on the heavy picnic basket that Deaky was carrying, nearly causing him to drop it.

“Use your words sweetheart” said Jim as though talking to a toddler just learning language.
“He wants us to set up camp on that free bit of sand” said Roger.

Freddie nodded, helping Deaky by grabbing the wine cooler.

Freddie ran across the road as though it were hot coals, as he had not yet put his clogs back on.

Everyone laughed.

“Freddie should consider a career in silent movies” laughed Deaky.

Bill tutted and rolled his eyes.

Brian laid a large chequered blanket on the sand, and began to unpack the picnic.

They could tell that Brian and Deaky had prepared the food, as it was all wrapped geometrically and stacked in Tupperware boxes.

Meats and cheeses together, but separate from fish. The sandwiches were cut into party triangles, with cocktail sausages on sticks with pickled onions and pineapple chunks stuck into the back of a foil shaped hedgehog.

Freddie prioritised, and opened the champagne, pouring the bubbling liquid into plastic flutes.

He handed a flute to everyone and raised his “Cheers everybody.”

“To the end of a shitty month” said Deaky, as they all raised their glasses.

The boys had gathered on the landing the previous night after Freddie had fallen asleep on Jim, to discuss the day’s activities.

They had decided to bring the Scrabble board – much to Roger’s annoyance - to encourage Freddie to talk.

Freddie loved Scrabble, usually always won, with the exception of the times that Brian won, and would become animated shouting loudly when he got a good word.

On this occasion though despite the board being out, Freddie was distracted by the sights of Brighton beach, and seemed more contented to people watch.

Roger quickly turned it into a game of x rated eye spy, when he spotted a number of topless ladies.

Freddie joined in by pointing out cocks in speedos. At least he was talking.

Jim had noticed that with the exception of a couple of bread sticks, Freddie hadn’t eaten anything, and had drunk rather a lot of champagne.

Although lying with his head on Bill’s lap, Jim proceeded to hand feed Freddie chipolatas, which he seemed to enjoy eating if accompanied by personal attention.

“Do you fucking mind?” snapped Bill glaring at Jim.

Jim faked confusion “Nope, not at all” he said poking a crab stick between Freddie’s lips.

Bill slapped Jim’s hand away, and Freddie pouted when he missed out on his snack.

Jim’s amusement at his expense always angered Bill greatly, and Jim was tempted to reveal that he
would actually like to feed Freddie a much larger sausage just to enjoy the effect it would have on Bill - but of course he kept schtum.

Bill picked up the empty bottle of champagne, and hunted through the cooler box for more beer.

“Freddie we’re going to the pub” snapped Bill.

Freddie wrinkled up his nose “I’m settled” he said quietly.

Bill stood quickly bumping Freddie’s head from his lap.

“Now you’re not. We’re going. Come on.”

“He said he’s fucking settled” snapped Roger squinting up at Bill, one hand shielding his eyes from the sun.

“You don’t need to talk for him now, he can talk for himself. Freddie come on!” Bill sneered down at Roger.

“Why would he bother fucking talking, you don’t fucking listen.” Roger growled attempting to stand.

Freddie tugged the bottom of Bill’s jeans leg. “You go honey, come meet me after the gig” he puckered his lips to receive a kiss, which Bill gave him fully while never taking his eyes from Jim’s face.

Jim smirked.

As Bill trudged up the beach Roger said “I spy with my little eye something beginning with P.”

“Pillock?” offered Jim hopefully.

Roger high fived him.

Freddie having lost his Bill pillow, gathered everyone’s sweaters to make a comfortable head support, but it wasn’t satisfactory.

“Didn’t anyone think to pack my blanket?” Freddie pouted.

“Fred, it’s a day at the beach, and that would be your job if you wanted to bring your blanket.” Deaky reminded him.

Freddie pouted, then with a flash of inspiration he laid back against Jim, who unfortunately was also on the move.

Jim laid Freddie’s head down carefully on the sweaters, and jumped up looking at something in the distance.

“Just a minute,” he said and headed off quickly down the beach.”

Freddie followed him with his eyes, pouting at his second lost pillow.

“Think he ate too many of those dodgy fish things” said Freddie to Roger pointing at the remaining crab sticks.

“He’s got the shits” yelled Roger.
They both laughed.

Jim joined the back of the queue for candyfloss.

He could not get his mind off that kiss, and although he tried not to over analyse, he was wondering what it could mean.

There was no denying that kiss was incredible.

Unplanned, unexpected, but incredible.

How did Freddie go back to politely kissing Bill after that?

Did Freddie plan to end things with Bill, or was kissing another man so passionately just another day ending in Y for Freddie.

Whatever the circumstances, Freddie always seemed to be ahead of Jim.

He was being led a merry dance, Jim never fast enough to keep up.

It was just days since the start of Freddie’s recovery from mental breakdown, and he was singing little ditties about people falling in love at Brighton just to taunt him.

Surely….surely….it was Jim’s time.

“Come on mate, there’s a queue.” In his distraction he hadn’t noticed that he had reached the front of the queue for candyfloss….at least he was at the head of one queue.

Deaky and Roger clocked Jim first making his way over with an enormous stick of pink candyfloss.

Roger smiled brightly nodding his head. He approved.

Jim put a finger to his lips, and distracting Freddie with a kiss to his cheek he presented him with the candyfloss.

It was bigger than Freddie’s head.

Freddie squealed before wrapping both arms around Jim’s neck, and kissing his cheek.

He grinned ear to ear as he accepted his enormous treat, wrapping some of the pink floss around his finger and jabbing it into Jim’s mouth.

Jim locked eyes with Freddie, and couldn’t resist giving him a sultry look while sucking on his finger.
It backfired, as Jim started to feel turned on again.

He sat back down, and pulled Freddie’s back tightly against his chest.

“We need to talk about the gig” said Brian “What tracks are we doing? We only get two, let’s make them our best. What do we need out of the van? Deaky?”

Deaky had been helping Brian to get back into the swing of things.

“Well….” Deaky stammered “…I’ve been working on a new amp with Roy” he announced quietly as though he had just tried a new flavour of crisps.

“My God Deaky! How come you have never mentioned this before?” said Brian astounded.

“Well…it never seemed the time. Anyway, it’s in the van, so odd time to trial it, but it will make you sound bigger” he pointed at Brian “and we can use it to make other orchestral sounds, so we’ll just sound ….fuller …like there are more of us.”

“Fuck!” said Roger with his jaw hanging open. “You need to stop being so thick Deaky, smarten up a bit, like our Freddie here.”

Freddie was trying to pull flecks of candyfloss out of his hair.

Jim chuckled. “No fair when he can’t get his words out Rog.”

“Can we see the illuminations after the gig?” asked Freddie quietly.

It usually annoyed Brian when Freddie changed the subject to something trivial during band meetings, but as it had probably taken him an extra five minutes to get those words out, Brian was being very patient.

“I don’t see why not. Everyone up for a night out?” asked Brian.

Everyone nodded.

“Think Bill will re-join?” asked Roger with his face screwed tight.

Freddie giggled “You love my boy!”

“No Fred. I really don’t” said Roger deadpan. His face brightened up, and he pointed at Jim “Why don’t you fuck Jim instead?”

Jim thought he could barbecue the last remaining sausages with the heat from his face.

Freddie was suddenly examining his candyfloss.

Jim mouthed “You bastard” at Roger, who shrugged his shoulders and whispered “I can’t be any more obvious mate.”

“Fred, do you want to do Flick of the Wrist using Deaky’s new amp?”

Freddie shook his head firmly.

“No? I thought you’d be dying to sing it?” Brian was surprised.

“Can we do Keep yourself alive?” asked Freddie. “I think we should showcase you guys more,
Rog’s paradiddle there in the middle.” Freddie smiled.

Deaky sniggered “Only you Fred, one of your first words is paradiddle.” Everyone laughed, except Freddie who looked self-conscious.

Jim gave him a squeeze.

“It’s just …what if I pike? At least if you guys sound amazing, it won’t matter so much if I lose my words.” Freddie said quietly, eyes to the ground.

Roger squeezed his hand “Freddie you have never piked in your life, and you won’t today. You’ll love it!”

“Ok” said Brian clapping his hands together to keep their attention. “Keep yourself Alive, and Liar.”

Brian knew that Liar was one of Freddie’s favourites, both indulging his insecurity, and thrusting him out there at the same time.

Everyone agreed.

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Brian rushed through the door at Jimmy’s.

He couldn’t believe they had let him fall asleep on the beach, or worse, be late for his meeting with the representative of John Reid Enterprises.

Jim had explained to him when he had awoken with a start that Roger, Deaky and Freddie had gone on ahead to set up, but had left him strict instructions that he wasn’t to let Brian sleep beyond 7 pm.

He also needed to remember that he was convalescing, and needed to rest before the high energy show.

Jim had reassured Brian that Freddie was in good spirits, and had told him a little about the beach in Zanzibar where he had been born.

Brian was amazed.

Freddie never spoke about his time before he moved to London.

Freddie was keen to hear the Deaky amp (as it had suddenly become known) so had taken the red special too to have a listen. Brian was not as thrilled about that part.

Brian was still pulling his jacket on, but was relieved to see that everything was in place in the concert hall.

Freddie was under a table with a control panel, and Brian could hear Deaky getting increasingly annoyed at Freddie pushing the wrong buttons, causing the lights to work out of sequence.

Roger’s drum kit was all set up, and he was strumming the red special - badly

A young gentleman in a suit appeared in front of Brian with his hand thrust out.
Brian ran his own hand through his curls before grasping the hand, conscious that he must have looked a state.

“John Reid. You must be Brian May?”

Brian was dumbstruck. They had got the man himself.

John Reid was surprisingly younger than expected, with dark hair and a strong Scottish accent.

Brian shook his hand, and John gestured for him to sit down at the desk.

Freddie appeared already dressed for the evening’s gig. He silently popped two cups of coffee down in front of John and Brian.

“I see you’ve met Freddie” said Brian.

“I’ve touched fingers with a quivering exotic flower if that’s the same thing” said John sarcastically.

Brian sniggered “He’s not been well….well, neither of us have. We’re just bouncing back. You’ll see a different side to him on to the stage.”

John leaned in his chair to look around Brian “I’m seeing a different side to him now. He didn’t look like that earlier. Oh…”said John his attention back on Brian “…there’s something I need to tell you, and I hope it won’t change anything from the business side of things…I’m gay.” He said bluntly.

“Doesn’t bother me John” said Brian “I probably shouldn’t say this because it’s not my place to, but so is Freddie.”

“Mmmm” he said looking around Brian again “We’ll get along just fine.”

“Ok” he said snapping back into business mode. “What have you got for me? I haven’t got all night.”

Given the events of the past month, the band did not expect the show to go so well.

At Freddie’s insistence, they had set up as though for a full performance, and had even done a run through of their two chosen tracks beforehand, with full lighting and sound.

John Reid was very impressed with Queen’s professionalism.

Deaky had attempted to talk John through the creation of the Deaky amp, but he couldn’t be less interested.

He couldn’t take his eyes off the front man.

Brian had said that Freddie had been ill, but there was no sign of it on stage.

He was electric!

Not even losing an ounce of professionalism during two unfortunate power cuts which may, or may
not have been due to the Deaky amp.

John had heard a number of things about Queen on the grapevine.

The thing that had interested him the most, was why they hadn’t been signed yet.

He had heard enough.

He needed to make some calls.

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“Where the fuck is Fred?” Brian looked at his watch for the second time and rolled his eyes.

A few minutes later Deaky also tutted “How long does it take to get out of a one piece?!”

They had cleared all their equipment into the van some time ago, and were waiting for Freddie to go and see the illuminations now it was dark.

“He was excited about this bit” said Roger. “Come on Jim, he might be having a wardrobe malfunction, it’s your lucky day, he might be naked.” Roger pulled Jim along heading towards the dressing room.

They didn’t have to look far.

Jim saw Freddie immediately.

His back was pressed up to the wall, and he was being kissed senseless by none other than John Reid.

Jim’s heart crashed to his feet.

He had got his answer, their kiss earlier in the day had meant nothing.

Jim grabbed Roger’s shoulder “Come on” he said “before he sees us.”

Disappointment was also on Roger’s face.

Minutes later Freddie re-joined his friends, grinning dreamily.

Jim couldn’t help it. He was cut to the quick. He leaned close to Freddie’s ear and snapped coldly “Just how many men have you kissed today Freddie?”

The second he said it Jim wished he could take it back.

His words had cut much deeper than he intended, and he watched the happy smile on Freddie’s face turn to sadness, and his eyes be cast down.

John Reid swept down the corridor. The lapels of his jacket flying behind him slightly. He meant business.

“I want you” he said bluntly. “But before we get too carried away, I’ve just had a chat with your Mr
Beach. I want to know why a mobster known as Johnny Young has a hit out on you.”
Chapter Summary

It’s one step forward, and two steps back for Queen as mobster Johnny Young comes back to haunt them, but the boys are not going to let that stop them from enjoying the nightlife of Brighton.

Freddie talks through his worries with Jim, but is he hiding something?

Chapter Notes

Lovies I can’t thank you enough for the fab points you have raised in the last few days. You really help me to shape the characters.

I would also like to say a huge thank you to you Ballet_Shoe for suggesting this beautiful song as the theme to Freddie and Jim's kiss on Brighton beach. It's yet to leave my head, and if Encounters ever becomes a movie (ha!) we have a sound track :) :)  

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85B_REWeNcM

Despite his sharp words just seconds ago, Jim’s arms were around Freddie in a heartbeat.

He would have covered his ears if he could.

His actions did not go unnoticed by John Reid.

Freddie however howled with laughter. “That’s dramatic even for me darling!” he shrieked. Turning to the others he asked “Who is Johnny Young?”

Freddie was confronted by three faces; all drained of blood, and they had the effect of a cold glass mirror.

All were distracted by a noise as Bill crashed through the door a little worse for wear.

He noticed Jim’s arms around Freddie immediately, and rushed at him, pushing him hard.

Jim hardly budged.

“What the fuck are you doing? He’s my boyfriend!” Bill’s finger was in Jim’s face, but was having very little effect in the gravity of the moment.

John’s eyebrows were in his hairline at the latest intrusion.

Distantly Freddie could hear screaming.

In his mind’s eye, he could see Roger fighting for life.
“Are you fucking kidding me?” growled Roger. “We nearly fucking died that day Fred.”

Jim held up a firm hand to Roger, willing him to stop.

His concern about Freddie’s refusal to see a doctor rising to the surface yet again.

It seemed Freddie had completely suppressed the memory of that day.

“Anyone care to answer the question?” asked John hands outstretched, irritated by the constant interruptions.

Deaky realised he was probably the most reliable witness, and cleared his throat to start speaking, but Brian cut across him.

“Johnny Young is a thug, and a criminal” he said firmly. “He attempted to coerce us into signing a contract with him a few weeks ago.” He raised a hand “We didn’t, by the way, thanks to some very quick thinking on Roger’s part.”

Roger bowed his head, humbled by Brian’s rare praise. He frowned when he noticed Freddie pulling at the collar of his thin shirt.

“You alright Fred?” he whispered quietly.

“Hot, hot, it’s really hot in here.” Freddie was gasping for breath, and pulling at his shirt as though it was on fire.

“Jim, take Freddie outside please” said Brian firmly.

Jim wrapped an arm around Freddie and steered him towards the door. Angrily, Bill stomped after them.

“Oy, anger management…” Roger called after him furiously “…is your name Jim? Come back here, we might have finally found a use for you.”

Jim pushed the fire door open, and guided Freddie out into the courtyard behind the building.

Freddie was gasping desperately for air, eyes wide, bending forward, hands on his knees.

Jim wrapped an arm around him trying to steer him away from the building into the fresh air, but Freddie pushed him away violently.

“I can’t … breathe” he gasped “Don’t touch me….you’re too hot….Roger….” he called turning back towards the building. “He’s gonna kill….Roger.”

Freddie’s words fell away as he struggled between memory and reality.

Jim took advantage of a moment’s calm to carefully lift Freddie’s head, and look him in the eye, forcing him to focus.

“Freddie, do you trust me?” he asked.
Freddie looked dazed.

Jim wiped away a stray tear with his thumb.

“I asked you a question” he said softly trying to capture Freddie’s attention. “Do you trust me?”

Freddie nodded.

“Well in that case please believe me when I say you’re going to be fine. Roger is fine. I promise you. Now, have you got asthma Freddie?” asked Jim, approaching Freddie’s breathing difficulties logically.

Freddie shook his head.

Jim persuaded Freddie to wander a little further away from the building.

Freddie seemed to be calming now, and the vision in his mind’s eye had returned to the present day.

He turned to look at Jim suddenly “I could hear him, you know, hear the screaming, and he was gonna….,” Freddie covered his mouth “Roger was on the outside of the window…maybe I’m just ….losing it.”

“You’re not losing it Freddie” said Jim. “You see that guy over there?” He pointed into the distance at a man who was walking back and forth, shouting to himself, and pointing a finger to his head as if it was a gun. “He’s crazy. You….you still have it, trust me.”

Freddie giggle tearfully.

“I think you have some sort of nervous complaint. If you would just let us take you to the doctor he could rule out anything else” Jim reasoned.

Freddie shook his head violently.

“You know, you performed like a dream in there” said Jim trying to distract him. “You’re like the unstoppable bullet train in Japan. Nothing gets in your way.” He leaned towards Freddie and whispered conspiratorially “You know, I think Deaky is a bit scared of you. You nearly flattened him AND his guitar when you whirled around with that mic stand. I’ve never seen him move so fast.”

Jim was rewarded with another tearful giggle.

“So much happens to you Freddie. In a short space of time. You’re not supposed to need to be this strong” Jim said quietly.

He really was not very confident that Freddie would open up to him, but he had to try.

He was grateful that Freddie was speaking at all.

Freddie shook his head, looking down at his feet. “I’m not strong.”

Jim looked up at him “You’re the strongest person I know. More has happened in the few months that I’ve known you to make you concerned, and stressed, and fearful, than happens in most people’s lifetimes.”

“It’s ……it’s because I always make terrible decisions.” Freddie admitted quietly.
Jim nodded “Yes…” he said gently “…sometimes you do make bad judgements…” he poked Freddie carefully in the ribs “…but a lot is done to you - bad things that are outside of your control - do you understand?”

Freddie was quiet for a few moments.

“I hate it when other people get hurt because of me – like when Brian was in the hospital.”

Jim gasped “Do you think you did something to hurt Brian? Oh Freddie!” Jim pulled Freddie to his chest. “Brian was ill – do you remember now? He had hepatitis. No one could have stopped him from getting sick, certainly not you, you didn’t give that to him!”

“I’m dangerous” said Freddie sadly pulling back. “You should get away from me as far as you can before you get hurt too.”

Jim nudged him and chuckled “I’m tough, I’ll take my chances.”

Bill was making his way across the courtyard, he seemed to be staggering a little.

“Look out” said Jim “It’s my lucky day”

Freddie giggled.

“What’s going on in there?” Jim shouted to Bill as he made his way over, deflecting any accusations Bill might throw at him.

“It’s all boring band shit, Freddie are you coming?” Bill grabbed Freddie’s arm.

“If it’s a band meeting I should go in.” Freddie started to walk towards Jimmy’s, but Bill pulled him back.

“Why did I bother coming at all today? You’ve done nothing with me all day” Bill snapped sulkily.

“You should go with him sweetheart” said Jim brightly.

Jim didn’t enjoy agreeing with Bill, but he was eager to know what they needed to do to defeat Johnny Young, and if he had a part in it.

“You wanted to see the illuminations. I’ll take down the band stuff…” Jim said tapping his head, “…and I’ll fill you both in on the journey home. Go on. Enjoy it!”

Freddie and Bill made their way out of the courtyard, when suddenly Freddie turned back and shouted “Remember what I said, stay the hell away from me.”

Jim starred after them for a moment, wondering who benefited from Freddie’s last statement.

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Jim eventually made his way back into the building.

Jim had hoped and prayed he would never hear the name Johnny Young again –he had never even met the man - but with his experience of the bad and the ugly, he might be useful.
Jim re-entered the room quietly, and closed the door behind him.

His solo entrance got everyone’s attention.

“Is Freddie OK?” demanded Roger concerned.

Jim nodded. “I couldn’t say how much he remembers, but he’s a lot calmer now.”

Roger looked towards the door “Where is he?”

“He’s gone to the seafront with Bill.”

Roger screwed up his face.

Jim shrugged “I know mate, but it’s better than him being in here listening to threats made on your lives.”

Roger conceded with a nod. That was fair enough.

Jim turned to face John, his arms folded across his chest.

“So….a hit? Bit drastic for a young rock band isn’t it? What are we talking?”

John shuffled some paperwork. “I don’t think he’d be that stupid, but we can’t afford to be careless. Johnny Young has a reputation. He’s ruthless in the rock world – hard rock normally – he doesn’t usually bother with the likes of Queen. The band must have impressed him. I think it’s mainly about money.”

“We didn’t sign his contract” said Brian “Surely that accounts for something. He can’t hold us to …..nothing?”

“No…not in a court of law, but men like Johnny Young rarely do business in court. Jim Beach has been grappling with Johnny since you gave him his business card in Portsmouth. He’s held Johnny off this long, but he’s getting restless.”

“Jim didn’t say a word to us” said Deaky mystified.

John shrugged. “With Brian laid up in the ICU, and Freddie…unwell…what’s up with Freddie anyway?” John looked at each man individually.

Brian shrugged.

Roger looked defensive.

“You didn’t notice he was a bit…quiet earlier?” asked Deaky cautiously.

“I didn’t, no.” John sniggered. “We didn’t talk much.”

Jim felt his blood boil to the surface, then instantly cool again.

He could hardly get cross with John for taking exactly the same opportunity that he had snatched that morning.

“No?” John looked around for any more answers to his question.

“Fine. I’m keen to get this moving. I suggest we arrange a meeting between the band, Jim Beach,
and Johnny Young, and find out what it’s going to take to get him off our backs.”

“I don’t think we should put Freddie back in that environment” Jim appealed to Brian and Roger.

“Well I’m not exactly stoked, it was me he nearly killed!” snapped Roger.

“Suit yourselves” said John, “I don’t care who’s present as long as the band is represented.” John started to leave.

“Err….John?” said Jim nervously, he was not accustomed to dealing with businessmen…or hit men for that matter.

“Freddie’s out there now with his boyfriend. Are these boys safe? Do we need to look at getting bodyguards….security of some kind?” Jim asked tentatively.

That was Jim’s world.

John laughed “Ha! No. I did exaggerate a bit, to see if they would tell me the truth. I can’t work with people who lie to me. Johnny’s words were he’ll take them down if he sees them play. That’s why I suggested Brighton, and not London. They should be alright on the street.”

“Should be alright?!...” started Jim horrified, starting to wonder if John was legit “…well that’s reassuring…..”

Brian cut him off.

“So basically you’re saying we can’t play music?” snapped Brian.

John pointed at Brian. “Bingo. Until we get this mess sorted, so don’t go playing for anyone else.”

With that, John swept from the room.

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“Fuck!” Brian hissed under his breath. “You know what that means don’t you– our career is based entirely on Jim Beach, and John bloody Reid untangling this mess with Johnny Young. We can’t play, we can’t rehearse, we can’t make any money.”

“Do you think Reid is in with Young?” asked Jim, fearing where this was going.

“I hadn’t thought of that” said Brian pointing a finger at Jim. “Well spotted.”

“We need to get Freddie’s thoughts on this” offered Roger. “He’s a whizz with all this business relationship stuff, and he’s still got all those business cards from the contest.”

“We shouldn’t dismiss John Reid out of hand” said Deaky. “I like him. I think he’s charismatic - brisque - but charismatic. He may be just what we need to bridge business with the networking side of things. Young too, not old and crusty. We don’t have any contacts, he has loads.”

“He’d be bloody perfect if he’s genuine” said Brian, calming a little.

“He’s already charmed the pants off Fred” Roger grinned. “Jim and I saw them having a post gig
snog down the hallway.”

Brian rolled his eyes, and slammed his hand angrily on the table “Why does Freddie have to fuck every business associate we ever make?!” Brian snarled.

“Settle down Bri” said Roger. He couldn’t stand it when anyone judged Freddie. “We don’t know what the kiss meant yet, it might have been all Reid.”

“Great! An impending harassment case!” snapped Brian.

“You need a drink mate” Roger snapped back.

Brian ran his hand through his hair “I can’t Rog. I’m still on medication. I’m just tired – sorry if I’m a bit short lads - I bet Freddie is exhausted too wherever he is. What was his speech like Jim - after his latest scare?”

Jim nodded “Alright actually. He did talk to me a bit earlier. Surprised me. He remembered the events of that day a little differently. Blames himself for your illness Brian, not sure how it got mixed up in his head.”

Brian raised an eyebrow “Odd.”

“He seems to blame himself quite a lot actually.” Jim muttered under his breath, but wasn’t heard.

“Right come on, lets go and get him. We’ll drive home, fill Freddie in on the actual events of that day, and have a chat about what comes next. I agree with Jim, lets not put Freddie in a room with that animal, but we need to be honest with him, keep him informed. I know it’s hard to believe sometimes, but Freddie is not actually a child.” Everyone laughed “… and he’s a phenomenal business brain.”

The boys made their way out onto the promenade.

It was dark, and the night life of Brighton was in full swing. The sights something to behold.

Jazz could be heard playing from a nearby bar. The saxophonist could be seen in the doorway enticing people in.

“I love jazz” said Deaky surprising everyone.

“Good album title” said Brian. “…especially if it’s actually not Jazz on the album!”

“Whoah” exclaimed Roger his eyes lighting up. “All these bars to choose from. Freddie and Bill are the proverbial needles in the hay stack.”

“Freddie stands out everywhere he goes” said Deaky with a smile. “Let’s start with the brightest lights.”

“They said they were going to see the illuminations” said Jim squinting as he looked off towards the distant end of the promenade.
“Ok” said Roger excitedly “A beer in every bar until we find Freddie and Bill.” He rubbed his hands together.

Jim laughed out loud. That did actually sound appealing.

“You’re up Jim” said Deaky. “You’ve had Freddie to look after every night for a month. You deserve the most beers.”

“I don’t think he’d mind looking after Freddie for another month Deaks” said Brian laughing in Jim’s direction.

Deaky blushed “No… I meant….”

Brian laughed out loud finally starting to relax.

“I can’t drink” he said “I’m still on medication, so I’ll volunteer to drive us back to London.”

“No!” said Deaky. “That’s exactly why you shouldn’t drive. I’ll drive. Rog’s already half cut from lunch, and Freddie actually can’t drive.”

“Freddie can’t drive?” asked Jim, eyebrows raised.

Brian laughed “Nope. Add that to your list of duties.”

Roger’s face lit up. “I bet Fred’s shitfaced!”

Quietly Jim hoped not. Bad things happened when Freddie got drunk. Perhaps once – just once – he had actually managed to let his hair down, and have some fun – without the drama.

Using the power of Freddie’s deduction, the boys made their way into the bar with the brightest lights, and the loudest music.

Jim thought he’d be excited to take in the night life of Brighton, but he wasn’t – not really. He did fancy a drink, but mainly he just wanted to know that Freddie was alright.

He wouldn’t interfere with Freddie and Bill’s evening. Jim had - after all - sent Freddie off with Bill. If he could just see that he was having fun from afar that would be enough….for now.

Tonight, Jim was fresh out of responsibility, and more than a little pissed off about the latest development with Johnny Young.

Freddie had once said to Jim “I just want to make music.”

Why didn’t life allow him to do just that?

Deal Freddie a simple hand for once.

Allow him to spend his days composing at the piano, his evenings on the stage mesmerising an adoring audience, and his nights in Jim’s bed.

Jim knew he was getting ahead of himself, but he also knew that Freddie must have felt…something.

That kiss…

Jim couldn’t get it out of his mind.
Jim was no angel – and he was no Freddie – but he had kissed a lot of men in his time, and had his fair amount of casual sex.

None of it had compared to that kiss.

But what of Freddie’s kiss with John Reid?

Jim gladly accepted the drink that Roger put before him – straight brandy – neat.

Jim brought the shot glass to his lips, and downed it in one.

Four hours later, they stumbled into a rowdy bar at the end of the strip.

A drag show was underway, and there were games tables set up.

Jim and Roger had been drinking beer, with a whiskey chaser after each pint.

Jim felt as though he was back at home in Ireland, and Roger foolishly thought he could match Jim drink for drink.

“I bet he’s in here” said Roger excitedly, tripping over the doorstep as he entered the bar. “This is Freddie’s bag.”

Roger was right.

Freddie and Bill were seated at a roulette table, with a large group of recently made friends.

Bill could be heard shouting above the crowd, having a fantastic time.

Roger pulled out a chair at the table next to them, as Brian and Deaky headed for the bar, threatening to get them both water.

Freddie was perched on one of Bill’s knees.

Jim tried to read Freddie’s face, but he couldn’t see straight himself. Everything seemed brighter and bolder.

Jim had promised the lads that he wouldn’t go over if Freddie was still out with Bill.

That he would mind his own business, but the drink was making that harder.

Freddie smiled and nodded as his new friends made conversation, but Jim couldn’t see his lips moving.

On closer inspection, Freddie looked flushed with frustration.

He nudged a friend and leaned in to say something, but the person on the other side got in quicker.

Freddie sat back again. His sparkly dark eyes seemed dull and flat in the dimmed lights of the club. He looked exhausted.
“Think you’ll ever get through to him?” Brian was suddenly at Jim’s side putting another pint in front of him.

Jim laughed “I don’t find him that unreasonable!”

“That’s because you’re gaga over him” said Deaky laughing.

Jim rolled his eyes “Guilty as charged, but my point still stands – I talk to him, and he does listen.”

“Do as you say, does he?!” said Roger teasing, knowing there was no way on God’s green earth that anyone could get Freddie Mercury under their thumb.

“No!” Jim wailed. “Nor should he. He needs to use his own judgement, but I’m just saying – if he feels he’s heard, he’ll listen more.”

“You mean a bit like Bill listens.” Roger pointed over to the roulette table with murderous intent.

Jim followed his eye line.

Freddie emptied his pockets of the last of his money, and gave it to Bill for the game.

He was tugging at Bill’s sleeve to get his attention, to no avail.

Bill was enjoying the attention of the other people at the table too much.

Freddie slammed his fist down on the table causing everyone to finally look at him.

He turned to say something to Bill, but nothing would come out. Freddie looked at Bill hopelessly.

Bill roared with laughter, as did everyone else. “Fuck’s sake Freddie speak up, we haven’t got all night!” he jeered.

Jim saw Freddie retreat from the table, dashing away a tear. He looked around for somewhere to quietly slip away.

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In the next instance, Bill’s mocking face was inches from Jim’s.

His shirt collar was bunched in Jim’s fist.

Bill’s back was to the wall. There were overturned chairs.

Jim’s fist was poised ready to connect with Bill’s face.

Jim was trembling with rage.

Then he felt the lightest touch on his hand, but it landed like the heaviest blow.

He turned to see sad brown eyes.

The lips were moving, the words so quiet, but so loud in Jim’s head. “Please don’t Jim. Don’t make it harder for me.”
The anger drained from Jim in a heartbeat.

He released Bill, and turned away, apologising to the people who had gathered around them.

“I’m sorry. I’m didn’t mean to ruin your evening. Please forgive me.”

******************************

It seemed that Jim’s retreat made things temporarily harder for Freddie, as Bill didn’t stop chirping at him all the way to the van.

Bill pushed Freddie bodily into the van, so hard that he missed the seat altogether.

Jim had had enough, but he couldn’t pick another fight with Bill. He would have to wait for Freddie to speak his own mind.

As it happened, Freddie wasn’t speaking at all.

With both hands under Freddie’s arms, Jim pulled him up off the van floor into the seat furthest away from Bill.

Roger quickly slotted in on the other side of Freddie.

Jim himself now regretting not packing Freddie’s blanket.

******************************

Deaky steered the van onto the motorway towards London, and began to pick up speed.

“Right so, to catch everybody up…..” Brian began.

Deaky looked in the rear view mirror “Erm…..Mum” he nodded to the back.

Freddie and Jim were fast asleep with their heads resting on one another.

Roger’s head was awkwardly laid against the window, with his legs wrapped around Freddie and Jim. Bill was nodding, head to his chest.

Brian chuckled. He couldn’t really be annoyed, but sometimes…just sometimes he did feel like Mum.

“Aah look at them” he said before closing his own eyes.

******************************
Freddie sat cross legged on the living room carpet, the last remaining business cards laid out in front of him.

He had spent one and a half hours in a telephone box with Brian already that morning speaking with prospective agencies.

Despite the emotional highs and lows of the previous day, Freddie had never spoken more clearly or consistently.

It was profound how good a business man he was.

He appeared to throw a switch; and Freddie the shy man disappeared, and the performer materialised in his place.

He would throw on a new suit, and grow ten feet taller.

Despite the occasional references, Paul Prenter’s despicable newspaper article had done far less damage than they had originally feared.

Queen were not only getting more offers to appear, they were also getting the attention of agencies and record labels, on the strength of their performances.

Johnny Young’s threat had not yet seeped out.

Freddie was a marvel.

He smelled a rat immediately, and despite a number of offers that should have made their pretty young heads spin, Freddie had stilled Brian’s tongue with a touch to the hand every time.

Nobody seemed to appreciate how special and unique Queen were, and until they were treated with the respect they deserved, Freddie didn’t budge.

No, Freddie was waiting for the perfect deal for his precious Queen, and he would accept nothing less.

If only he would apply the same rigorous selection process to his partners thought Brian.

As though summoned Deaky answered the door, and John Reid swept in.

Freddie quickly gathered the other business cards together, and pushed them under the sofa.

“You’re getting a fucking phone” snapped John. “I can’t believe I’ve had to come all the way down here. The engineer from British Telecom will be here this afternoon.”

Roger high fived Deaky.

“A meeting has been set up between Jim Beach and Johnny Young tomorrow afternoon at 2 pm. At least two of you need to attend. Strength in numbers. Jim thinks it’ll boil down to money, and how much.”

John looked at Brian, and pointed at Freddie “Bring his bodyguard, it might do Johnny some good to know he’s not just dealing with feather weights.”

Brian raised his eyebrows “Bodyguard?”

John clicked his fingers frustrated at having his time wasted. “That chap from yesterday.”
“Oh Jim, yes, OK, I’ll ask him. Will you not be present?” asked Brian suspiciously.

“No. I require Freddie’s services for the afternoon.” John’s expression softened. “I have tickets for the ballet.”

Freddie couldn’t find his voice, but his smile was from ear to ear.
Encounters: Behind the Curtain

Chapter Summary

Freddie and Jim go their separate ways for the day when Freddie heads off to the ballet with new manager John Reid, and Jim heads off to tackle mobster Johnny Young.

Both are hoping for freedom – Jim for the band, and Freddie emotionally.

Chapter Notes

Sorry it’s taken so long to upload this lovis….I’ve faffed with this chapter for longer than the previous 36 put together!

Please please read this chapter with care. There are no actual accounts of violence, but Freddie is replaying his memories from the time he was mute, and they are not nice 😞

Jim looked from Brian to Roger to Deaky, and back to Jim Beach.

He felt out of place in these situations.

Jim Beach had visited the house to run through the pertinent facts, and get them all onto the same page, before driving them into the city to meet with Johnny Young.

It wasn’t that Jim was intimidated by Johnny Young.

Jim’s home town was full of self-made crooks.

It was their attire that intimidated him.

Jim wasn’t used to thugs in suits.

He was used to dealing with drunken football fans, gang affiliates, drug pushers, the type that leaned a bit too hard on the young and unprepared – like Freddie.

Although Jim could never accuse Freddie of being unprepared.

He seemed to know a little too much for his years.

It was for Freddie that Jim was putting himself through this day.

For every day lost that he couldn’t sing.

For every time he couldn’t say yes, or no, or I don’t want his to happen to me.

For every night he had laid awake lost in the dark whirl of his own thoughts.

For every tear he had cried scared he would never sing again.
Roger was being denied the opportunity to meet with Johnny on this occasion.

Jim Beach thought him incendiary.

Jim had to agree.

Roger was fast becoming his own wing man, whenever someone needed dealing with.

If Roger was in the room, Jim knew he could quite easily be enticed to knock Johnny’s head clean off his shoulders.

No.

He had to keep his cool, and work through the impasse quickly, so the band could get back to business.

Performing would be good for Freddie – he could leave it all on the stage.

**************************

Swan Lake, the Royal Ballet, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

It was the stuff that Freddie’s dreams were made of … the good dreams.

It had taken him forever to decide what to wear.

Freddie felt he was never very good at this, but when John had arrived fully suited to pick him up, he knew he had made the right choice.

He was still fidgeting with the cuff links.

He never could sit still.

Freddie had been unable to make much conversation in the car – which in itself was intimidating – a brand new Mercedes-Benz 280 SE – not that Freddie cared. He didn’t have much interest in cars.

He had tried to make light conversation about music, but John has instantly sense his discomfort, and told him to relax, that he wasn’t at work now.

John teased him a little for being so quiet, when his on stage persona was so loud, but he didn’t mean any harm. John thought it refreshing. Many of his young signees talked a lot, and said very little.

On his arrival at the Royal Opera House, John had surprised him with a gift.

A silver bangle that could be wrapped over his wrist.

The bangle was enormous on Freddie’s slim wrist, but it was bang on trend, and Freddie loved it immediately.

He only just managed to refrain from squealing, the way he had done when Jim presented him with the candyfloss at the beach.

Freddie didn’t know John that well yet.
Instead he opted for a demure thank you, dropping his gaze to his lap, but he couldn’t help but watch how the sunlight reflected in the silver.

As they walked up the steps into the Opera House, Freddie couldn’t contain his excitement any longer.

He loved the buzz of Covent Garden, and the architecture of the old building fascinated him.

He found himself chatting amicably to John about the lines and the textures used in the building.

Freddie could tell immediately that John was a man of taste and culture, and was intrigued by him.

Freddie didn’t meet many people like John in his locality.

Freddie had to make a good impression – for the band, and for himself.

This is the life he wanted for them.

Freddie didn’t feel very confident in these environments, but perhaps he looked the part.

Maybe he could fake it - the cultured, sophisticated man going to the ballet.

A far cry from the places that Paul or Bill had ever taken him.

This was the first real date Freddie had ever been on.

There was a quality about John. Something inspiring, but comforting all at the same time.

John was ambitious, direct, and fervent.

He wasn’t that much older than Freddie – maybe he was around 25 years old.

He had harder edges though. John knew what he wanted, and was taking the most direct route.

Freddie knew he could learn a lot from John.

Freddie valued experience in a person.

“Good seats” said Freddie, as they were escorted to the balcony.

It would seem the polite thing to say, but they actually were very good seats.

“These are a perk from one of my clients” said John. “I’ll introduce you sometime. It would be good for you to start mixing with a few more industry folk.”

“How did you know I love the ballet?” Freddie asked with a coy smile.

John looked at Freddie directly. “I know everything about you Freddie Mercury. I know you compose predominately in E flat minor, and I know the type of men you fuck. I never slack on due diligence.”

Freddie felt like he was standing on a precipice. He hoped the valley below was a bed of roses.

He couldn’t help but make surreptitious glances at John throughout the outstanding performance.

It pleased Freddie that John seemed as enchanted with the performance as he was.
That despite obvious wealth and grand opportunity, he hadn’t lost touch with the simple pleasures.

Freddie remembered watching the ballet when he was growing up. One of the privileges of attending one of the top ten boarding schools in India.

Saturday afternoons were spent enjoying the theatre, ballet, opera, and of course music.

In many ways Freddie didn’t feel a day older than he had then.

Freddie felt John’s hand squeeze his thigh, full of promise of what was to come.

John leaned over and whispered in Freddie’s ear “Are you enjoying the show?”

Freddie turned to see John give him a rare smile.

“I love it darling, thank you. Thank you so much” Freddie said squeezing John’s hand.

***************************

Jim assessed the atmosphere as soon as he walked into the room.

Two men standing on the door. Suits for hire at a guess. Easy to corrupt if the terms were favourable.

The king himself was sitting on his throne.

Emblazoned with anger, Jim held out his hand to the first of the suits. He would be the better man, and at least he could eye ball him.

He imagined Freddie in this environment, and the gnawing in his gut intensified.

Had he not been scared half to death, he could imagine Freddie getting the giggles, or trying to charm these men with cute smiles and flutters of his eyelashes until they were so dazzled they fell over.

Jim had seen Freddie in action when it came to business. He was shrewd, and entertaining. He wasn’t above a temper tantrum when something was of particular importance to him.

Instead, these men twice his age and twice his size had pressed their advantage from the off.

They were no different than Jim Connors – just wealthier, with a hard nose for exploitation.

Brian had more upstairs than the three of them put together, and that is where they would lose.

It was going to be a very long afternoon, but victory would belong to Queen.

There could be no other outcome.

***************************
Freddie stood at the window of The Savoy hotel looking out over London. 
He had a glass of champagne in one hand. His jacket hanging over his arm.
This was living.
Strong arms grabbed him from behind, pressing a kiss to his neck.
“What do you think?” asked John.
“I think I would like to live here forever” Freddie giggled. “With room service, and the jacuzzi bath.”
John carefully took the glass from him, and threw his jacket over the arm of a nearby chair.
He reached from behind, and hurriedly unbuttoned Freddie’s shirt, whipping it down his arms.
John gasped.
“Shit, Fred!” he ran a finger carefully down his bruised ribs, before following the patchwork of purples, blues, greens and yellows around to his front. “What the fuck happened here?”
In his anticipation, Freddie had forgotten what his body might look like to a casual observer.
“I b-box in my spare time” Freddie stuttered.
“Do you really?” Freddie could tell by John’s voice that he was impressed.
Freddie could remember enough from his school days to answer any basic questions.
“You lose a lot I’m guessing” John said sarcastically.
Freddie giggled.
John reached a hand round to Freddie’s belt buckle. “Come on, out of those, I want you.”
Freddie grinned.
He could do this.
It was simple.
He would just force his mind onto his music.
Examine every detail – every lyric, every bar, so that his mind becomes absorbed completely.
Only his body would remain in the room, in the now.
An empty shell for men to do what they liked with.
If he tried hard enough, he could ignore nearly anything.
It wasn’t that Freddie didn’t find John attractive – he did. John had class, he had style, he was quick, and intelligent. That made Freddie a very lucky man.
John wasn’t Freddie’s usual type, but he was charmed by his power.
A young man who had clawed his way up in the world.
Enough power to arrange negotiations with the mob.

Enough power to see off an unwanted boyfriend.

Freddie had been trying to leave Bill for weeks.

Bill would not let him go.

Freddie had calmly justified his reasons; Bill needed someone better, someone that had time for his needs instead of the band.

He had listed all the things that annoyed Bill about him.

Freddie had shouted. He had pushed. He had scratched. He had even broken down in tears.

Bill had erased all Freddie’s reasons for leaving during sex.

It wasn’t as though Freddie was being assaulted.

He had never said no.

If he was being assaulted, he wouldn’t want it so badly – he wouldn’t want to be that close to another person.

To feel another body hard against his own.

To feel large hands on his back, clutching his buttocks.

To hear another person breathing hard while they lost their sanity inside his own body.

His need to be that close to someone was greater than ever.

He also wouldn’t be able to finish - if it was assault.

He always did.

Although he never felt it coming.

Bill would tell him how good he was, remind he of how wonderful they were together, while groaning loudly as his own body shuddered.

Why all of Freddie’s reasons to leave were unjustified.

It had started when Freddie couldn’t speak.

Bill became convinced Freddie was lying. That he was deliberately holding out on him.

It had started with the shaking. Then the slaps to his face. Then the punches to his ribs and his kidneys – only ever where the bruising couldn’t easily be seen.

Bill would ask him things, and hit him when he didn’t respond.

He would use sex, pounding at him, his ultimate goal to get him to make a sound.
The screaming was in Freddie’s head, but it wouldn’t connect with his voice.

Since then things had got worse.

Every time Roger - and especially Jim – got angry and violent towards Bill, he took his anger out on Freddie.

Bill had lied to Jim and Roger the night Freddie went missing from the club.

They hadn’t even been to a club.

Bill had taken Freddie back to his place. He had been very drunk, and had started yelling.

Freddie’s memories of that period were a tangle.

He couldn’t understand things properly.

He would hear people speaking, and see their lips moving, but only rarely make sense of the words.

Bill was too loud.

Freddie had covered his ears with his hands when he couldn’t bear the sound.

Bill had started to hit him until he couldn’t breathe anymore.

Sometime later he had woken, and Bill was crashed out in a drunken sleep.

Freddie had silently made his escape.

He didn’t remember too much more about that night. He didn’t remember getting home.

He remembered Bill being at his home the next day for some reason.

He remembered Roger becoming angry, and hitting Bill.

Freddie knew he was becoming angry to – dangerously so. Sometimes the rage inside threatened to consume him.

He had taken his opportunity to escape the room, flee upstairs, and take too many painkillers.

He remembered Jim rocking him until he had fallen asleep. Holding him much too tightly at first, causing everything to ache.

He thinks he remembers Jim saying he had been terrified when they couldn’t find Freddie. Only then had he relaxed his grip.

Jim had been so close during those nights.

Freddie dressed carefully for bed, making sure he was wrapped in his blanket before lying down.

Jim would touch his skin, and hold him close.

Freddie loved that, but Jim couldn’t see the bruises.

No - it wasn’t that he didn’t find John attractive – not at all.

It was that everything hurt.
John barely waited until Freddie was out of his suit trousers before grabbing him and kissing him hungrily.

Freddie kissed back eagerly. He hands seeking skin at John’s neck, pulling at his tie and shirt collar which didn’t seem to want to budge.

Neither man knew how to proceed.

John didn’t know what to do with his hands. “I don’t know where to touch you.” He waved his hand gesturing the bruises “Does any of this still hurt?”

Freddie lowered his head just enough to give John a coquettish look through his hair “Shut up and kiss me darling.” He grabbed John’s tie and pulled him in for a kiss.

Breathlessly, and not breaking from each other, Freddie and John stumbled over to the enormous bed in the centre of the room that was completely adorned in white.

Perhaps this was a fairy tale, and John was the prince that had come to sweep Freddie away to the magical kingdom.

“Freddie, relax, you’re like a fucking vice. You’re crushing my hand.”

Freddie wrapped a hand around the back of John’s neck tangling it into his hair, pulling him closer for a passionate kiss.

He desperately willed his body to relax.

John tore his lips away. “I can tell I’m hurting you. You’ve either partied too hard or you’re a virgin, my money is on the former” he grinned, gently withdrawing his hand.

Freddie grabbed John’s hand pulling it back towards his body, with a lighthearted laugh. “It’s fine darling.”

“Freddie, stop!” John forced Freddie’s hands above his head.

“I’m not a monster. You’re not into it today, that’s fine.”

Freddie didn’t know where to look.

He could feel embarrassing tears start to prickle behind his eyelids.

If he couldn’t make his body cooperate, John would walk away.
The band would lose another manager

Freddie would lose his opportunity to escape his hell.

Why didn’t John just force him, like the others.

John got off the bed, picked up his crisp white shirt and started the button it up.

He turned, and Freddie was on his knees, looking up at him hungrily.

“There is something I can do darling” he reached a hand around John’s hips bringing him towards him, a hand around his cock, heading towards his lips.

John clasped his shoulders gently. “No Freddie, stop that please. Let’s just leave it for today. I’m not feeling it either now. Come on get dressed, we’ll go and see how the meeting went.”

John turned his back and started to pull on his boxers, then his trousers.

Freddie sat back on the bed, his arms folded protectively around is waist, eyes to the ground.

He waited for John to break the devastating news.

John turned back sharply “Freddie, what are you …four years old? Come on, get ready. Tomorrow I’ll take you out for dinner, introduce you to a few of my people.”

Freddie’s head shot up “Tomorrow?” he asked hopefully.

“Yes…as in the day after today. Come on!”

Freddie dressed quickly, pushing his bangle over his wrist with a snap.

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The atmosphere was mixed when Freddie and John arrived back at the royal household.

Roger wanted to know every single thing that had been said, and wouldn’t let up until Brian and Deaky had told him every last word.

Jim Beach was quiet and introspective.

Jim couldn’t wait to see Freddie.

Things had been a bit different since the kiss, and Jim felt both nervous and excited every time he saw Freddie.

Freddie acted like an infant who hadn’t seen his cousin for a few months, whenever Jim walked into the room. He would suddenly go very quiet and shy, but after ten minutes in each other’s company, it was as though he couldn’t stop talking.

Freddie told Jim things about himself that even his band mates didn’t know.

Brian had said that it was an immense privilege, as Freddie didn’t talk about his life at all.
Jim never asked questions, he let Freddie reveal himself in his own time.

There wasn’t much else Jim could say. He had told Freddie every conceivable thing about himself the night Freddie had turned up on his doorstep unable to speak. He must have spoken for six hours straight throughout that first night, using his voice to comfort Freddie, although he didn’t know how much Freddie had actually heard.

Freddie had also returned to his own room to sleep.

There were times that Jim felt redundant, and wondered if he should just go home.

Every time he made a move to go, something would happen.

Freddie would pour Jim a drink, rendering him unable to drive, or he would put on an old movie that they would both thoroughly enjoy.

Sometimes Freddie would start to compose something on the piano, and would ask for Jim’s opinion.

Last night, Jim was putting on his jacket, and Freddie presented him with an enormous sandwich.

Freddie never made food.

The dynamic had definitely changed, but Jim still didn’t know if it was good or bad.

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“£100,000”

“I beg yours?” said John, blinking rapidly, thinking he hearing things.

“£100,000, that’s how much Johnny Young wants for allowing Queen to perform under another label.” Jim Beach stroked his chin.

“Alternatively we take a chance. Get them a decent security company. Follow them around like dogs, but how long for?”

“How can we be sure that Young will honour the deal?” asked John.

“We can’t, but he’d be stupid not to. Messy business trailing four kids. Takes money and manpower. Some people might not have the stomach for it, when they realise they are a bunch of college kids and not Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid” said Jim.

“I’ve got the paperwork drawn up, but it’s your call. Depends how much you think a band like Queen could be worth in a few years’ time.” Jim raised his eyebrows. “I’ve negotiated bigger deals to get people out of bad contracts, but it’s still a gamble, and it’s your money. It’s a shame these kids didn’t have someone like you in their corner when they met Young.”

John thought on it.

He liked Freddie… a lot.

Freddie didn’t have it yet, he was a raw product, but he was keen and would go to the length of
causing himself pain to achieve a goal.

John could see his potential.

Stan had been right to refer Queen to John….Freddie was a funny one…but all the best ones were.

Just take his Elton.
**Encounter: Good Company**

Chapter Summary

Summary – Queen are thrilled to be signed to John Reid Enterprises, and can’t wait to get back on the road again.

Meanwhile Freddie and John’s relationship deepens, when John gives Freddie some unexpected advice.

Freddie’s virtuosity in the multi-tasking department once again come to the fore.

Chapter Notes

Over 5,000 hits lovelies I can’t believe it! You are all fantastic. Your support is so valuable to me in shaping these characters, and delivering this fic. Thank you so much :)

The cork was released from the bottle with a loud fizz, and the Moet en Chandon bubbled out onto the counter top.

There were shrieks all round as the band scrambled to capture it in their flutes, before too much of the celebratory drink escaped.

“Long may she reign” said Jim Beach with a laugh. He clapped John Reid on the back “I knew you couldn’t resist.”

The boys had linked arms, and were dancing in a circle around the kitchen.

Jim took a sip of his champagne, happiness beaming from his face.

The events that had occurred since that fateful night he had met Queen at The Market Tavern ran through his mind’s eye like a silent movie.

The boys deserved this so much. They had suffered so much. They had worked so hard.

A series of events - however painful and traumatic - had got them here.

Without one step, the next step could never have been taken.

Jim thought back to the days of Paul Prenter.

Paul’s doomed personal relationship with Freddie notwithstanding, it was obvious, with hindsight, that he was never going to be the right manager for the band.

As for Queen - that period of their career had greatly increased their expectations of themselves, and what they could achieve - given the right backing.
John Reid was the right backing. The band were safe now.

Despite his involvement to date, Jim could not help feeling a little excluded.

The band had never made him feel that way. They were so warm and welcoming in everything they did, but Jim knew his days were numbered.

Queen would be off touring the world shortly. It would happen quickly now. They would leave him behind.

Jim Beach laid the paperwork out on the breakfast bar of John Reid’s home, and held the pen out to Brian.

“Do the honours Brian”

“Hang on” said Roger, pointing a finger at Jim Beach. “Don’t you need to sign the contract?”

“Me?” Jim jabbed a finger into his chest. “I’m your solicitor. Why would I need to sign the contract?”

“Brian told Young that he had given you signing rights for the band?” he asked, an eyebrow raised.

Brian grinned slowly.

“Huh?” Jim Beach looked confused. “That’s not legal surely?!?”

Roger’s face lit up as realisation dawned on him of how incredibly brave Brian had been that day.

Deaky laughed out loud as he cottoned on too.

The boys clapped Brian on the back laughing, and pulling him into a hug.

Freddie stood back with his hands on his hips. He didn’t like to be excluded. “I don’t get it. What are you on about?” he pouted.

Roger pulled on his hand pulling him into the hug.

“It was the other day Fred, you weren’t there. Don’t worry about it.”

The boys had all agreed that Freddie’s memories may or may not return fully. They would deal with it if they did, but they were not going to trigger them unnecessarily.

“Right, boys” said John smiling enormously. “It’s going to be no bed of roses, no pleasure cruise, it’s going to be back breaking work. You’re going to meet some inspirational people, and you’re going to meet some twats who want to ruin you, but I promise you it will all be worth it. Everything must come through me – all events, all bookings, all interview requests, all unpaid bills. Under no circumstances must you break up.” John paused for breath. “How do you feel?”

Deaky looked faint.

Freddie raised his glass “Like a millionaire darling.”
Freddie curled his fingers around the spikes of the hairbrush in his jacket pocket.

The keen pain kept his attention, and halted the waves of anxiety that were lapping at his stomach and his throat.

He knew he was trembling slightly, and would struggle to raise his eyes from the ground, but he also knew the days of his fears overwhelming him were coming to an end.

He had to overcome his fear of meeting new people, get out there and be seen. Make an enormous rock star entrance everywhere he went. Sluff off the timid private school Freddie, and exude confidence and whit and power. Dazzle them all. After all they would all be new people when he was an international rock star. Every tour manager, every percussionist, engineer, wardrobe, drug dealer. Freddie swallowed a giggle.

John had chatted to him on the way to Provans, a Scottish restaurant just off Fulham Road.

The owner, a friend of John’s from Paisley, went back to childhood.

John was convinced Freddie would thoroughly enjoy the evening, and get on well with the people he was dying to introduce him to.

Cool faces, who would catapult Freddie to rock celebrity.

Freddie had made an enormous effort to bridge a gap between looking good enough for John to eat, and looking like a rock star.

He had squeezed into a pair of eye wateringly tight white jeans - with the assistance of Roger and his coat hanger - and a faux fur coat which revealed slithers of skin, just enough to tempt John into devouring him later, but not enough to be considered ill-mannered in an eating establishment.

His hair had been back combed to within an inch of its life, and rather resembled feathers. His eyes – with renewed sparkle – were lined heavily in black kohl.

Freddie’s only piece of jewellery was the silver bangle that John had given him.

Despite his jacket peeping open at the torso, Freddie had dressed carefully to conceal his bruises - although he could always pass them off as a mark of his sporting prowess.

John had been impressed. It could work as a conversation starter.

Freddie hadn’t seen Bill for a day or two, and he was already feeling stronger, and more confident.

It was handy having a phone at home. Freddie could talk to Bill from a distance where his fists didn’t extend, and explain that he was busy with Queen’s new management, and couldn’t see him for a little while.

Freddie’s injuries were given the opportunity to heal, and his words were coming so much more freely now to those he trusted.

John held open the door, and ushered Freddie into the restaurant.

Provans was nothing like Freddie was expecting, and he instantly felt more relaxed as he took in his
The main restaurant was small and charming, with sunny coloured soft furnishings, and large windows.

Diners were sitting in small groups around conservatory style furniture, talking loudly, enjoying each other’s company.

Freddie had been expecting a minimalist, cavernous room with white table cloths. The kind of place his nerves would cause him to giggle, or feel nauseous and have to leave.

“Here he is” John called out as a man in chef whites walked briskly over to the pair, shaking John’s hand, and pulling him into a hug.

“Fergus, this is my latest signee Freddie Mercury of Queen. Freddie this is Fergus, my long term friend, and chef and restaurateur.”

Freddie took the chef’s warm hand. “Pleased to meet you Sir, I love your restaurant already.”

The man chucked and turned to John “Sir?….I like this one already.”

“Very pleased to meet you Freddie. Queen hey? I’ll make sure you are treated like royalty this evening.”

Freddie’s smile was from ear to ear.

The evening got off to a very good start, with Fergus hustling them to a lively table along one wall, where a few members of the party had already arrived.

John was the perfect host, introducing Freddie to everyone and pulling out his chair for him to sit down.

Freddie managed to harness his anxiety, and was charming to everyone that John introduced him too. Giving out cute smiles and waves readily.

A little into the first course, four men were added to the party, who John introduced warmly.

Freddie couldn’t help but be impressed by how much everyone seemed to love John. He felt in safe hands.

“Freddie this is my associate David Evans. His flatmate was a good friend of yours at one time I believe? David Mimms?” John gave an amused smile.

Freddie blushed scarlet, and whipped his hand out of his pocket to shake David’s hand, before realising too late that he was still holding his hair brush. David yelped. Freddie was mortified.

“Oh gosh I’m so sorry. Are you OK?” Freddie held a hand up to his mouth.

David returned the brush to Freddie with a grin and a chuckle “I’ll live. John’s put me through worse.”

Freddie whispered to John “How did you know about David?”

David leaned in too and whispered in Freddie’s ear “John knows everything.”

The man beside David laughed loudly introducing himself into the conversation.
“Freddie allow me to introduce Peter Straker. Peter was born and raised in Jamaica, and like you he has an appreciation of musical theatre. You two will get along famously.”

Peter took Freddie’s hand and smiled warmly, pulling out the chair beside Freddie to sit down.

John introduced Freddie to the last two young gentlemen. “Freddie this is Alex and Justin. I used to manage their band for about two years, they look after themselves now. They’re all grown up” he said with a smile.

Freddie shook Justin’s hand, when he noticed that his bangle had caught Justin’s eye. Justin brought Freddie’s arm up to have a better look.

“I like that!” he gushed. “It reflects the light. Makes your hand look sweet and tiny though.”

Freddie smiled sweetly up at John. “I adore it. John gave it to me the other day, when he took me to see Swan Lake.” Freddie squeezed John’s hand.

“Are you up to your old tricks again John?” Justin laughed knowingly with a twinkle in his eye, and held up his own arm.

On Justin’s wrist was a tiny silver bracelet. Simple and delicate, it was completely different in style to the fashion piece on Freddie’s arm - but striking all the same.

“John gave me this beautiful piece of jewellery when he first signed our band.” Justin laughed loudly.

Pointing towards Freddie, Justin continued “This one looks a handful John. Not a pushover like me.”

Justin turned back to Freddie, winked and said “Very pleased to meet you Freddie. Have a lovely evening, and you’re in good company with John.”

Freddie watched him go, but perhaps more concerning than the bracelet on his arm, was the way John’s eyes followed his arse all the way up the stairs.

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John had been right, Freddie and Peter got on famously, like brothers in fact, and their mischievous laughter could be heard ringing out all over the restaurant.

Peter also played tennis, which Freddie adored, and they agreed to play a match the following Sunday.

Peter was loud, bubbly and vivacious. Freddie’s opposite in many ways, but Peter’s bombastic nature shadowed Freddie, allowing his anxiety to wane, and his natural sunny personality to shine through.

During the conversation with Peter, a chef came out of the kitchen, and made his way over to the table in the opposite corner of the restaurant, where he pulled up a chair and pushed himself into the conversation.

Freddie attention was instantly caught. The chef was gorgeous. Heavy set with dark good looks, and so familiar.
Freddie had to wonder if he had met the man before – maybe in a club. Maybe they had already fucksed.

His accent was thick and loud, which instantly caught Freddie’s ear, and warmed his stomach.

Freddie did love an accent.

The chef got up from his chair, caught Freddie’s eye and winked. With a blush and a coy smile Freddie looked down at his lap.

It was then that Freddie noticed that the man who’s attention he really wanted, had wandered again.

John was deep in conversation with a very attractive man to his right. The man was giggly and flirtatious, fiddling endlessly with a gold chain around his neck, and Freddie wondered if that was a gift from John too.

Freddie suddenly felt the volume in the room diminish as though he was being zoomed out. He didn’t like the feeling gnawing in his gut.

John had brought Freddie here tonight, he should be the centre of John’s universe.

Freddie leaned towards John curling his hand warmly over his thigh. John caught Freddie’s hand a little too firmly causing Freddie to wince, and John held his hand immobile in his lap, while he continued talking to the other man.

Freddie leaned over to John, and seductively whispered in his ear “My trousers are unbuttoned. I couldn’t sit down, they’re so tight.”

He was hurt when John barely registered the statement.

Freddie had been hoping that John would take him outside at some part of the evening, to finally get down to the business of being a couple.

That would make things right. John was probably feeling insecure, reasoned Freddie to himself. Perhaps he was wondering where he stood with Freddie.

Yes, Freddie had to put this right.

He whispered in John’s ear “Take me outside.”

John waved him away, with a preoccupied waft of his hand as his attention went back to the man beside him.

Pain ripped through Freddie’s heart.

He stood to back away. To get as far away from the cause of his agony as quickly as he could without making a scene, but yelped when he nearly tripped over the attractive chef who had crouched down beside him.

Freddie took in the chef’s enormous hand on the back of his chair, and sunk back down into it.

He glanced back at John, and was thrilled to see he had his full attention again. Determined to keep it, Freddie turned to the chef, fluttered his eyelashes, and said “How are you darling?”

“You not like your meal?” the chef grunted indicating Freddie’s half full plate.
Freddie suddenly felt very uncomfortable as though he had offended the chef in some way.

“The food is beautiful, thank you” Freddie smiled warmly. “I’ve just…eaten enough.”

The chef wrapped his fingers around Freddie’s wrist. “You’re too thin. I could snap you in two.” He wrapped a hand around Freddie’s thigh “See…here too.”

Freddie was stunned at the man’s rudeness, and frozen to the spot.

“I will make you something you will want to eat.” He tapped the side of his nose as he straightened up, and bullishly stomped back into the kitchen.

Freddie turned back to John, and was just about to ask to be taken outside, when he noticed John’s seat was empty.

“Don’t mind him darling” said a woman loudly, wrapping her arm around Freddie’s shoulder and pushing him back into his seat. “Chef is very gruff, but he means no harm, he wants to make everyone fat like him.” Confused, Freddie managed a giggle.

The lady sat beside Freddie in John’s recently vacated chair. She held out a hand “I’m Zandra Rhodes, I design clothes for the regal and the famous, and you absolutely must tell me how you’ve thrown this ensemble together.” Zandra flourished her hands around Freddie’s outfit.

Freddie and Zandra found they shared a free uninhibited spirit when it came to fashion, and had their heads together scribbling design ideas on the back of the paper napkins when the chef returned.

The chef crouched beside Freddie, and slammed two tiny shot glasses on the table in front of him, which by some miracle didn’t shatter.

“Mocha pots” he said proudly.

“It’s like sex in a dessert. Very good sex. The kind that you get from being handcuffed to a bed and touched in just the right way, and you can’t get away from it.”

Freddie felt very warm. The chef was staring straight at him.

“Hmmm…lick this” the chef raised the glass which appeared to contain a decadent chocolate mousse. “Sip that” the chef raised the glass that contained a dark coffee liqueur. “See? Alternate.” The chef raised each glass in turn.

Freddie wanted to lick something. The dessert would have to do.

The chef provided Freddie with a tiny little spoon, which Freddie held for a moment or two transfixed by the chef’s dark eyes.

Zandra nudged Freddie “Go on honey, give it a try.”

Freddie wasn’t sure whether he was more comfortable having Zandra there as support, or if he wanted to drag this man outside right now, and Zandra was holding him back.

Feeling as though he was under a very hot spotlight, Freddie dug the spoon into the mousse and delicately licked a little off the end. His eyes never leaving the chef’s.

“Mmmm that is good” he said self-consciously.

The chef nudged the second glass “Now this, same time in your mouth.”
Freddie took rather too much of the liqueur, and his eyes widened.

The chef rubbed Freddie’s cheek with the back of his knuckles. “Good. I like you. I’m going to get you a little drunk.”

* * * * *

Feeling very overwhelmed, hot, and a little intimidated Freddie made his way out to the gents toilets to look for John.

He was not in there.

Freddie suddenly felt very alone, and for the second time that evening considered going home.

The feeling that John had abandoned him was eating him up inside. Freddie couldn’t bear it, and it made him feeling like running.

Running home.

He hoped that Jim was there.

Freddie could hide in one of Jim’s hugs for a little while until that hollow feeling inside went away.

He quickly thought though the events of the evening. He couldn’t think of anything he had done to offend John. He had been charming, and polite, and complimentary of all his friends.

Freddie pulled his cigarettes out of his pocket and made his way out into the yard. He always felt calmer after a cigarette.

He lit the cigarette finding the glow comforting, and leaned back against the building watching the smoke curl off into the darkness.

No. He couldn’t go home. There was too much riding on it – for the band, and for Freddie.

He needed John to want him, to really want him - enough to protect him from Bill.

Freddie wandered a little further behind the restaurant, and heard someone breathing heavily. The breathing was followed by groans and whimpers.

Freddie almost smiled as he realised that in another place, another time, that would be him.

Maybe later tonight if the chef pushed much harder.

Sniggering at his own thoughts, Freddie turned to leave, thinking he would leave the couple to their privacy - when he saw it.

John was leaning back against the wall, eyes tight shut, breathing hard.

Freddie recognised the design of the shirt on the back of the person on his knees to John – Justin.

John opened his eyes at just the wrong moment, noticed Freddie in the shadows, and raised his hand in a curt wave.
Blinded by tears, Freddie rushed back inside, barely noticing the enormous chef coming down the corridor towards him until it was too late.

“No, you’re not leaving yet. Not until I have your number, and not until I’ve done this.”

Appearing not to notice his tears at all, the chef pulled Freddie into a bear hug, and pushed his lips hard against his.

Freddie’s senses swam. Too much alcohol, crushing disappointment, and being totally overwhelmed by this enormous indelicate bear swamped him completely.

Freddie relaxed in the chef’s hold, and let the feelings wash over him – enveloped, adored, shielded, revered, cherished.

It had been a while since Freddie had experienced really good sex.

The kind that wasn’t driven by anger, and fear, and violence.

He allowed himself to be kissed completely, if a little harshly, until the chef released him for breath.

“Go sit down. I’ll bring you a drink. You’ll like it…and I want your number. I want to take you to bed” the chef mumbled coarsely.

Totally disoriented, Freddie stumbled back to his seat, where Peter and Zandra were laughing loudly.

Freddie plastered on his best showman smile, pushing his tears down for the moment at least, and returned to tonight’s centre stage.

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“Try this one” the chef was beside Freddie again, holding out yet another shot glass.

“What is it?” asked Freddie suspiciously, making enormous eyes over the glass. “Will I like it?”

“You will Herzogin. It’s elder flower. I know my liqueurs. Down in one.”

Freddie drank the strong tasting liquid. It did actually taste very nice, if a little harsh, but by now the room was moving, and Freddie didn’t know how many more he could handle.

He felt a gentle hand on his shoulder, and through blurred vision turned to face John. He was alone.

John addressed everyone sitting at the table. “Right, I’ll be off.” Everyone smiled and waved at John, and thanked him for his company.

John turned back to Freddie and the chef, and said with a knowing smile “I can see that you’re OK, so I’ll catch you later.” He kissed Freddie’s cheek sweetly.

Freddie glanced at John, then with a wink he scribbled his address on a napkin, and poked it into the chef’s pocket.
The terrace wavered in front of him.

The emotions thundering inside were louder than the heavy downpour that Freddie had walked through for the past twenty minutes.

Emotions that had been tearing him apart for too long - fear, rage, frustration, pain - physical and emotional - trapped inside, unable to be expressed by words, or by cries.

Freddie stumbled, and kicked angrily at whatever had caused it.

There was a large piece of rock in his path.

“John” he yelled into the darkness. “John!!! You were supposed to make it right.”

A light came on in one of the windows.

Freddie squeezed the rock in his hand, feeling the sharp edges cut into his skin.

With a soft grunt, it left his hand.

The chinking of glass was deafening in the still night, as the lit window fragmented and shattered.

Freddie gasped as the gravity of what he’d done crashed over him, like the glass hitting the ground.

A light came into view as the front door was opened, and John’s silhouette appeared. He looked up the front of the building at the room now open to the elements, and back towards Freddie.

“You had better come in.”

Freddie stepped into the hallway dripping onto the contemporary tiles.

John took his trembling hand supporting him as they walked into the brightly lit kitchen.

“I’m sorry John, I’m so sorry, I don’t know what happened, what came over me, I didn’t mean it, I’m sorry” Freddie babbled, mortified.

John pulled out a chair for Freddie to sit down. He pulled a small towel out of the cupboard and handed it to Freddie for him to dry his dripping hair.

“Coffee’s on” said John.

Freddie sat with his head bowed, clasping his hands.

“Where’s the German?” asked John quizzically.
“He’s …erm still working. We’re catching up another evening.” Freddie stumbled.

“Ahh” said John turning as the coffee machine finished percolating. He poured the thick brown liquid into two glass mugs, and pushed one along the table to Freddie.

“So what was all that about?” asked John calmly.

Freddie didn’t know what to say. Where to begin. He wouldn’t find the words if he did.

“I’m waiting” said John.

Freddie raised his eyes.

“The German. Was he for my benefit?” John needed to start somewhere.

Freddie nodded. “I didn’t mean to spoil your evening. I’ve made such an idiot of myself. I’m sorry” whispered Freddie, dropping his spinning head into his hands.

John patted his hand, before getting up and returning with a plate of biscuits.

“Thankfully everybody else was too drunk to notice. You and Peter got on well?”

John pushed the biscuits towards Freddie. “Eat. We need to sober you up a bit.”

“Yeah. I really like Peter. He’s fun. A real hoot. He’s invited me to his birthday party next week” said Freddie brightening a little and pushing his lips together.

“Will you go?”

“I would like to” Freddie dropped his head before continuing “I don’t know anyone though.”

The men were silent for a couple of minutes.

“John, I’m so sorry about your window. I’ll replace it for you” said Freddie quietly.

John shrugged and waved a hand. “Don’t worry about it. You owe me £100,000 anyway, I’ll just add an extra £100.” He smirked, poking out his tongue.

Freddie couldn’t meet John’s gaze.

John briskly rubbed his shoulder. “Freddie relax. It’s called an artistic temperament. I understand you artists better than you seem to understand yourselves.”

Freddie dared to giggle. “I won’t do anything like that again. I promise.”

“No. You won’t.” John’s voice was firm, but his eyes had softened. “So, I’m going to go out on a limb here… you thought you and I were going to become…..a thing?”

Freddie nodded, colour rushing into his cheeks.

“You should know, I don’t do ‘things’ Freddie, and you don’t seem the type either.” John raised a questioning eyebrow, and continued. “I live by three rules. Number one – never mix business with pleasure. Number two – never take prisoners, and number three – scratch out number one if the pleasure is all mine.”

Freddie laughed out loud lightly punching John’s arm.
“You mean….”

“You mean….”

“Yes, you’re hot. That clingy little space suit thing went straight to my cock.”

“But we never….”

“I told you, I know the type of men you fuck, I’m not it. Just thought I’d try my luck, you weren’t into me. Hey ho.” John shrugged smiling.

Freddie was confused. He had never been given a choice before.

“Anyway, you’ve got a boyfriend.”

Freddie scowled.


Freddie tipped his head to one side, and frowned in confusion.

“The guy that practically spooned you in my meeting the other day. Irish.”

“Oh, Jim? Jim’s my friend.” Freddie said joyfully.

John raised an eyebrow and tutted. “Freddie, Jim is not your friend. A blind man can see he’d inhale you if he could!” John said sarcastically.

Freddie examined a crumb on the table, and started to chew on his nail. “Well…he did kiss me the other day. I mean ….really kiss me, like in the movies.”

John rolled his eyes. “Did you kiss him back?”

Freddie smiled and nodded, “Mmmm, it was so nice. I melted. He totally shocked me. Men don’t kiss me like that.”

John chuckled “Thanks!”

Freddie blushed, squeezing John’s arm. “No” he laughed “I didn’t mean to offend.”

John took a sip of his coffee.

“None taken. Go with him instead.” John said matter of fact.

Freddie gushed shaking his head rapidly. “John I can’t. He so nice! He wouldn’t want me, not like that. He must think I’m a slut.”

“Well, you are a slut, but sluts can fall in love too.”

Freddie rolled his eyes. “I can’t lose him. I’d fuck up in the first hour! John, he’s so nice to me. He stayed with me for three whole weeks when I was ill.”

“Give that man a knighthood. You’re a handful when you’re not ill. See, true love. What was wrong with you anyway?” asked John seizing his opportunity.

Freddie dropped his eyes, and said very quietly “I lost my voice.”

John laughed out loud.
“He stayed with you for three weeks because you had a sore throat, and you’re holding out on him. Aah Freddie, Freddie, Freddie, the man’s balls must be falling off.”

Freddie looked at John, and suddenly saw something different – something he had never really had outside of the band. A solid friend.

Suddenly feeling exhausted, Freddie asked “John….please would you take me home?”

John nodded, draining the last of his coffee.

“Tell you what, make me your first thousand, and I’ll buy you a car.”

Freddie squealed and clapped his hands, but he never really knew when to take John seriously.

“I can’t drive!” Freddie shrieked laughing.

John rolled his eyes with a smile. “Make me your second thousand and I’ll hire you a driver.”

The group were all at home when Freddie and John walked through the door.

They appeared to have had rather more to drink than when Freddie had left, and were similarly inebriated – despite John’s attempts to sober Freddie up.

The scrabble board was out.

“You started without me!” Freddie pouted.

Jim gave Freddie a squeeze. Despite the revolving door of men, Jim couldn’t help but be close to Freddie whenever the opportunity presented itself.

“One Mr Mercury delivered safe and sound, if a little worse for wear” said John with a smile.

John walked towards the door. “I will see you guys later….with a venue list” he winked. “Oh, and Freddie” he tipped his head towards Jim “think about what I said.”


“Our secret” whispered John.

“Good night all.”

Roger confronted Freddie the minute he had shown John out of the door.

“Why don’t you just fuck Jim?” he said laughing.
“I’m sorry?” said Freddie blushing profusely, and trying to angle his head away from Jim’s eye line.

“Your latest squeeze…the German….is the image of our Jim, but when he’s really pissed off!” Roger slapped his thigh doubled over laughing.

“He left you a gift.” Roger was swinging a pair of handcuffs from his forefinger. “Apparently these belong to you.” Roger read out the attached note. “A promise for tomorrow with a little heart.”

Roger threw the cuffs at Freddie before doubling over with giggles. Tears streaming from his eyes.

“I thought you were seeing John?” snapped Brian waving at the space John had just evacuated.

“Don’t mess him about Freddie.” Brian went on. “He’s been good to us. The band’s future is wrapped up with John.”

“What happened to Bill?” asked Deaky. “Not that I care.”

“Ok” snapped Freddie “As my love life seems to suddenly be everyone’s business, Bill is my boyfriend, John is my fuck buddy, and the German is my latest fuck.”

One by one they left the room, they knew they had pushed Freddie too hard.

Freddie instantly felt sorry for the way he had spoken to his best friends, and felt exposed standing in the middle of the room, holding a pair of handcuffs.

Slowly he dared to meet Jim’s eyes. There it was, the warm compassion, mixed with pity that never seemed to leave his face whenever he looked at Freddie.

Freddie’s heart dropped to his feet. He didn’t know why, but Jim’s opinion mattered to him more than anyone else.

“Jim, I get it” Freddie yelled, heading for the door. “I’m a slut.”

“Freddie” Jim said firmly, causing him to halt his escape from the room.

“I have never thought of you as a slut. I just wish you would take a little better care of yourself.”

The door slammed.

“…and you’re breaking my heart.”
Encounters: In the Pantomime

Chapter Summary

Jim is considering returning home as the unresolved tension between him and Freddie causes him to snap.

Queen are taken firmly under John Reid’s wing, and Freddie is barrel rolled into some experimentation by new boyfriend Winnie.

Chapter Notes

Lovies there is a fair amount of smut in this chapter. If you don’t like reading smut, it will be obvious when to look away. Enjoy 😊

Jim made his way down the stairs carrying his wash bag.

He really should start to think about going home. No one ever said anything about him sleeping on the sofa, but he had no real reason to stay.

Freddie was back sleeping upstairs in the room he shared with Roger again. His speech flowed almost perfectly again – give or take the odd shy moment - which was not uncharacteristic.

Jim missed Freddie terribly when he awoke in the small hours.

He felt cold – despite the summer months – but mainly Jim missed talking to Freddie.

Freddie would never hear him speaking - Jim made sure of that – but he would whisper to him when he was asleep.

Jim would whisper to Freddie all the things he loved about him, and about his plans for their future.

It was foolish to raise his own hopes in this way, but it was a way to release the pressure.

To say the things he wasn’t brave enough to say out loud in the cold light of day.

There had been times that Jim would carefully stroke Freddie’s cheek or temple, or perhaps his hair, but it was risky. Freddie would start to stir, and although he would snuggle closer, Jim did not want Freddie to wake.

Wakefulness was reality.

Jim could hear beautiful singing coming from the kitchen.

That was something else he would miss when he went home.

No matter how raucous Queen’s music once constructed, Freddie’s voice acapella while
absentmindedly preparing tea was the sweetest, most gentle, melodic sound he had ever heard.

Jim stepped into the kitchen and his heart nearly stopped.

Freddie had his back turned to him, but even from that angle he was a sight to behold.

Freddie was wearing a loose fitting satin top which could have looked angelic, had it not been paired with a breath stopping pair of leather shorts.

His hair was fluffy, as though he was about to step out on to the stage.

Jim groaned, and too late realised it had been out loud.

Freddie swung around, tea pot in one hand, and toast in the other.

“Darling, are you OK?” he rushed over to Jim concerned.

“You sound in pain. Please sit down.” Freddie pulled out a chair, and pushed Jim into it.

“Tell me what hurts?” Like a mother hen, Freddie had a hand on Jim’s shoulder peering worriedly into his eyes.

“It’s nothing Freddie. I twisted my ankle yesterday” Jim lied.

Freddie dropped to his knees on the floor in front of Jim, tenderly prodding at his ankles.

Jim couldn’t draw breath. The sight of Freddie kneeling before him in that outfit, peering caringly up at him through black lined soft brown eyes nearly finished him off.

“Which one darling? Nothing seems swollen.” Freddie asked.

Something was swelling alright, but it wasn’t Jim’s ankle.

“It’s nothing Freddie, leave it” Jim said frantically.

“No, really, you always look after me so well. Please let me help you” he insisted.

“Freddie, leave it!” Jim snapped harshly.

Jim realised the moment the words left his lips how severe he must have sounded to Freddie, who leaped back horrified, with a touch of fear in his eyes.

“I’m s...sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you.” Freddie stammered.

With his unfinished tea and toast left on the side, Freddie ran upstairs.

This situation is beyond ridiculous, thought Jim to himself furiously.

How had allowed himself to get here?

It was really fucking stupid.
“Where the fuck is Roger?” snapped Brian looking at his watch.

Freddie scooted into the living room, shooting Jim a tentative look through his hair.

“He went out last night” Freddie said with a grin. “He might still be kissing some chick goodnight.”

Jim grabbed Freddie’s hand and pulled him into a hug, dropping a kiss into his hair.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it. Are you OK?”

Freddie nodded, his face crushed against Jim’s chest.

“Lover’s tiff?” asked Deaky, eyebrows raised.

“Why do you need Roger? Aren’t we meeting with the solicitor shortly?” asked Jim, as Freddie broke free.

Brian looked at his watch again. “We’re already late meeting with John and Jim! Johnny Young’s signing the contract today, being late is a bad idea. We don’t want to give him any reason to have anything else over us.”

“Are we taking Roger?” asked Jim surprised. “Is that a good idea, if we don’t want the man riling up again?”

“No, Roger’s not coming with us. Freddie doesn’t like being on his own, so Rog will stay here with Freddie while we’re gone” said Brian looking at his watch for the third time, as though Roger might pop out of it.

Freddie grinned “Oh, I won’t be alone.” He looked very pleased with himself. “Winnie is coming around, and he wants me all to himself.”

The penny dropped. The reason for the outfit it would seem.

Jim’s gut twisted painfully

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Freddie wandered into the living room sipping clear liquid from a glass.

He tripped over Roger’s foot with a loud squeal, who held a hand out to steady him.

“Steady Freddie” he said with a grin, to a series of groans and eye rolls.

Roger’s eyes widened when his nose came close enough to the glass for it to take his breath away.

“That’s fucking vodka!”

Brian looked disgusted. “It’s nine-thirty in the morning Freddie, how can you drink that on an empty stomach?”

“I’ll have you know Mr May, I’ve had a meal today” Freddie said matter of fact.

Brian tutted “Likely story.”
Jim cast his mind back to the single bite of toast Freddie had eaten that morning - before he had managed to upset him.

“Freddie, one bite of toast does not a meal make” said Jim with a smile.

“It’s more than he usually eats” grunted Roger.

“I’ll have you know…” started Freddie again, enunciating every word perfectly “…that my new boyfriend is a chef, and he makes me eat all the time, and it’s nauseating. Especially when he bounces me around straight after” he finished cheekily.

A fresh round of groans.

“Urgh, too much information Fred” said Brian grimacing.

Jim smiled, he couldn’t help but catch onto Freddie’s lighthearted mood. It was wonderful to have the playful side to him back after him being silent for so long.

“Well I’m not altogether comfortable with us leaving Freddie home alone with a man he feels the need to mainline neat vodka for before 10 am” Jim said with a smile, imitating Freddie’s accent.

Brian pointed at Jim, nodding in agreement while drinking the last of his coffee.

“You can stay and watch if you like Jim?” said Freddie batting his eyelashes.

Jim lassoed Freddie with his tie. “You are a minx who is just scared I will teach you something.”

“Ooh promises, promises Mr Hutton” purred Freddie wrinkling up his nose.

Deaky rolled his eyes “Get a room you two!”

Jim could not fathom the look in Freddie’s eye.

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“Mmmmm-mm” Winnie pulled Freddie towards him looking him up and down like he was the catch of the day. “You look good enough to eat.”

Freddie fluttered his eyelashes. “Come on then. I’m all yours darling. Everyone else is out. Just me here.”

Freddie closed the door behind him, and was instantly smothered by Winnie’s embrace.

Winnie gestured towards a basket he had dropped on the hallway floor in his hurry to hug Freddie. “I’ve brought you some goodies.”

Freddie smiled “Thank you darling” he pulled Winnie towards him. “Can I have this goodie first?”.

“Mmmmm…..twice” purred Winnie pulling Freddie into a suffocating kiss.
The atmosphere was very different when John Reid and Jim Beach escorted Jim, Brian and Deaky into Johnny Young’s office.

Johnny somehow seemed deflated. He had got what he wanted - money for nothing. He would move on to other unrepresented budding stars.

One of Johnny’s men closed the door behind the group, and stood just inside with his feet spread wide, and his arms folded across his chest.

Jim met his eye, copying his stance, making himself look larger than ever.

Intimidating hired suits – that part was easy.

John and Jim Beach approached the desk.

Johnny didn’t get up, he instead peered around the men towards the door.

“Where are the little ones?” he asked with a smirk. “I was hoping you would bring them to see me today, it being hopefully the last time we meet.”

He looked at Jim, then raised his lips further, making himself look more slimy.

“Right up your street that is it…children?” said Jim fixing Johnny with a glare.

John dropped some paperwork on Johnny’s desk, recovering his attention.

“Mr Mercury and Mr Taylor are rock stars Mr Young. They don’t have time for this petty business, they have musical interests to attend to. That is why they pay us…to deal with the …” he waved his arm mimicking Young “…odds and ends that come with the business of being desirable.”

John gestured towards the paperwork, and handed Young his titanium Parker pen.

“Here is the contract that YOU will sign.”

John pointed to the solicitor “On signing this document you will allow Mr Beach here to borrow that there telephone on your desk. He will call his banker, who will transfer £100,000 into the account of your choice.”

John continued “Let me be clear. A copy of this document has been lodged with three other members of Mr Beach’s alumni. If any member of Queen so much as sneezes, we will evoke the conditions of this document, and you will be charged with extortion, coercion, false imprisonment, grievous bodily harm, and emotional distress. Be warned; I know people, Mr Beach here knows people, and Mr Hutton certainly knows people, so don’t be thinking you can sneak around the law. You are not as smart as you think you are Mr Young.”

“Say, full of yourself aren’t you….Mr Reid. I like those kids, they were fun. Easy to manipulate if you know what I mean.”

Jim stepped closer to the desk.
Johnny waved him away. “Settle down cowboy, I’m just having a lark with you.”

He picked up the pen and signed the contract, never once breaking eye contact with Jim. “The little ones were so much more fun.”

Jim Beach quickly made the call, then scooped up the paperwork and stored it in his briefcase.

John beckoned to Johnny to give him his pen back.

“I would shake your hand, but I know your courtesy is worthless.”

With a nod of his head, John turned and walked briskly towards the door, stopping only to push Brian and Deaky ahead of him, and to beckon Jim Beach through it.

Jim waited beside Johnny’s desk until the party had all safely filed from the room.

Not sure what came over him, Jim leaned over the desk resting on his knuckles.

He stared Johnny Young in the eye, inches from his face for a moment or two before snarling “If you so much as lay eyes on Freddie, or speak his name, your life will not be worth living, do you understand me?”

When Johnny remained silent, attempting to stare him out, Jim slammed his hands on the desk and roared “Do you understand me?”

A slow smirk came across Johnny’s face “I knew it! He’s your little chickadee.”

With one clean swing, Jim’s fist connected with Johnny’s face knocking him back into the chair.

He didn’t get up.

Jim made his way out of the room passed the two confused henchmen, and slammed the door.

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The boys were still laughing when they met Roger out on the street.

“I can’t believe you did that” said Deaky shaking his head. “I still cannot believe you did that.”

“I can’t believe I did that either!” Jim was worried about the consequences of his actions now that his blood had cooled.

He turned to Jim Beach “Tell me I didn’t compromise the deal?”

Jim Beach shrugged his shoulders “I dunno, what did you do? I didn’t see anything.”

There was fresh laughter as everyone made their way into Wimpy Bar.

When seated in the booth with their meals, Brian said to John, “You mentioned emotional distress. When you asked us the other day what had been wrong with Freddie, did you already know?”

“Of course he knew!” said Jim Beach with his mouth full of chips.
“Yes, of course. I told Freddie - I never slack on due diligence. Queen are an acquisition. I thoroughly researched every area of the business before investing a sizable chunk of money. You are a commodity. I wanted to know how you would all react to the question.”

“Did we pass?” asked Roger with a grin, not really sure what John had just said.

“With flying colours. You closed ranks. You protected your brother. You’ll need to do that every time the media comes sniffing.”

John sniggered. “I asked Freddie the same question the other day. He told me he’d lost his voice.”

John gestured to the others with his hamburger. “He never lied, he gave me the pertinent facts. Nothing more, nothing less.”

“Freddie should be here” said Jim wistfully.

“You had him yet?” asked John matter of fact, poking a chip into his mouth.

Jim choked on his.

“Does everybody know about that?” shrieked Jim glowing.

“Yep” said John.

Everybody laughed. It was very unusual that anybody got one over on Jim.

John nodded towards Jim. “He’s ripe for picking you know.”

“Freddie is at home…with his boyfriend” stated Jim, with not a little envy.

“Which one – the angry looking chap, or the German?” asked John.

“The German” said Brian, Roger and Deaky in unison.

“Flash in the pan” said John with confidence, dipping his chip in the tomato ketchup.

Freddie groaned loudly as Winnie stroked a hand down his cock.

God it felt good.

The bruising on Freddie’s torso had sufficiently faded to be passed off as a shadow, and his body was once again alive to the sensation simple touch could bring him.

Winnie was a little ardent. Often forgetting that he could crush Freddie with a single shuffle, and gave him very little choice but to take whatever he was dishing out, but he wasn’t cruel, and fun was on both of their minds.

Freddie inhaled quickly as he took Winnie into his mouth.

He moved his lips down the shaft, taking him as deeply as he could before doing it all over again,
and again and again.

Winnie laid back with a loud groan, and Freddie felt the hand around his own cock go slack.

Freddie loved making men feel like this.

Having that power to crash giants to a groaning weeping mess with just his lips and his tongue.

He had the ultimate control. He would never rush, but he would control men completely.

The master of his art, making men forget where they were, and what they were doing.

Men he had blown once, always came back if he saw them in a club.

Freddie was in no doubt of the power he yielded with his body, and it didn’t matter the fetish.

A strategically placed outfit would be the undoing of some, for others it was his glance.

Larger men, and often older men, were drawn to a body much slighter than their own. Freddie could read them like a book.

Some men let him take control, safe in the knowledge they had the strength to stop him, they enjoyed his pleasure at doing what they liked.

Others liked to be controlling, using brute strength over a smaller body, or alternatively treating him like cut glass.

Either way the control belonged to Freddie.

Freddie’s mind flashed back to the night Jim had driven him over the edge with his mouth.

It had been a little awkward. Freddie couldn’t gauge what Jim expected of him.

That said, Jim was the best he had ever had – not that he’d had many - he mostly took pleasure in giving blow jobs, but he remembered being completely lost in the sensation.

Freddie shuffled a little higher over Winnie’s body as he began to shake.

Freddie knew he wouldn’t be long now, and he had to resist smiling with his mouthful.

Freddie groaned loudly, confident that the vibration around Winnie’s cock would be the end of him.

Warmth rolled into Freddie’s stomach, the kind he could only get from knowing how Winnie felt right now, and that Freddie was the cause.

Winnie shouted out in orgasm, his body clenching as Freddie swallowed, taking everything he gave him.

Slowly, Winnie returned to the room, and Freddie sensually crawled up him with a beaming smile.

“Was that good?” he asked seductively fluttering his eyelashes, knowing that Winnie had just won the jackpot.

Freddie squeaked in surprise when Winnie’s reply was to flip him onto his back, holding both wrists securely above his head, and running his other hand over Freddie’s hip and up his back pulling him securely against his body.
Freddie squealed again in shock and delight, laughing loudly when Winnie pulled his cock into his mouth for a moment, before slapping his bottom a little too hard, and releasing him.

“God, you’re so bloody small” declared Winnie loudly.

“Thanks!” said Freddie with a playful flash of his eyes down to his cock.

Winnie roared with laughter burying his head in Freddie’s stomach, winding him slightly.

“I didn’t mean there. There is quite satisfactory” he said wrapping his lips around Freddie’s cock again.

“Just satisfactory” Freddie teased gasping at the sensation.

Winnie ran a hand over Freddie’s buttocks, running his fingers over the entrance.

“Got an lube, I’m getting into you.”

Freddie reached a hand back to the cabinet, opening the draw, he handed the bottle to Winnie.

“I hope it’s freezing” Winnie teased depositing more than half the contents of the bottle over his hand, the excess dribbling over Freddie’s stomach causing him to squeal.

Winnie lay alongside Freddie, wrapping his leg securely over Freddie’s stomach, his lubed hand disappearing over his leg, a finger teasing Freddie open.

Freddie tried to wriggle himself free enough to open his legs to take it.

The man had large fingers, and it was seconds before Freddie was writhing around with the pleasure.

He absolutely loved the feeling.

Winnie looked a little surprised, before quickly adding another finger.

Freddie held up a hand giggling through his gasps “Just a minute” he said breathing hard while his body adjusted.

He nodded to Winnie, who began to massage at the spot Freddie loved so much.

He couldn’t control his body as the pleasure rushed through him.

He dropped his head back, mouth open as his back arched, and his hips almost moving on their own, tempting Winnie in a little deeper.

“Mmmmm you’re a pleasure” said Winnie “but you are also a wriggler” he added “Where are those handcuffs I sent you?”

Freddie laughed out loud, and pointed to the drawer that the lube had come out of, unable to move that far with two of Winnie’s large fingers inside him.

Freddie whimpered as Winnie gently withdrew his fingers, his body feeling bereft.

Moments later Winnie’s grinning face was above him as he deftly clasped both Freddie’s wrists in one of his hand, raised them above his head, wrapping the cuffs around each one, and passing the link over the metallic white bed frame.
Winnie then got up, wandering around the room a little, opening drawers, until he pulled out two of Rogers ties with a proud grin.

He grabbed Freddie’s ankles, and pulled him squealing with laughter down the bed. Freddie was only just long enough to reach. Winnie looped one tie around each ankle and fastened them securely around the bed footer.

Winnie looked down hungrily taking in the vision before him.

It was obvious that Freddie was very aroused. His cock was already fully hard, his cheeks flushed, and his eyes flashed with desire and humour.

Freddie felt divine. The cool air all around his hot body, open and willing.

“Now then” said Winnie lying back down beside him pulling on the ties firmly, causing Freddie to wince as the metal nipped at the skin at his wrists. “Now you just have to take it.”

Freddie smiled seductively as Winnie poured more lube over his hand, most of it splashing down onto Freddie’s thigh.

Winnie wrapped his hand firmly around Freddie’s cock stroking a couple of times before pushing a finger firmly back inside him.

Freddie gasped, rolling his head back as it was followed by another.

He felt his temperature rocket, and his heart thud as Winnie inflicted the sensation he loved so much.

He longed to thrash around, but could barely move any part of his body. He knew he was crying out very loudly, and hoped the neighbours wouldn’t complain.

Bit by bit Winnie took him apart with the deep touches, pleasuring shooting up his back and into the pit of his stomach.

Winnie was beaming “Mmmmm so good, you’re so good. Can you take another?” Winnie asked, eyebrows raised as a third finger brushed alongside the second.

Freddie raised his head to look at Winnie, sweat pouring from his brow, eyes rolling back in his head, and nodded.

Carefully Winnie pushed another finger up alongside. Freddie groaned loudly as the pleasure intensified, and tried to roll a little to absorb it, but he couldn’t move an inch.

Winnie rolled closer into Freddie’s side as he adjusted his hand, getting a straight hit to Freddie’s prostate.

“Think you can come like this?” Winnie growled in his ear.

The sensation in his stomach made Freddie instinctively want to curl inwards, but he couldn’t move at all now that he was also being restrained by Winnie’s body.

Freddie suddenly became aware that he was too hot, and tried to get a little space between him and Winnie, but he couldn’t move.

He felt the bite at his wrists, and couldn’t move his legs.

A cold numbness gripped him from his stomach, working its way out to his fingers and toes.
“You are still wriggling! Relax, you’ll feel amazing” Winnie laughed.

Suddenly Freddie felt pain so severe it took his breath. He knew somewhere in his brain that it wasn’t Winnie’s doing.

He tried to shuffle a little, but found he couldn’t breathe either.

He started to gasp, shaking frantically.

Winnie’s face swarm before him.

Freddie pulled desperately at the restraints, feeling oddly smothered and exposed all at the same time.

He bucked wildly trying to get the slightest freedom, aware that Winnie had removed his fingers from his body.

He was still in terrible pain.

He saw Winnie’s face crease with concern, and felt a hand at his brow as black spots moved into his field of vision.

Suddenly Freddie could move his legs. He pulled them up protectively to his stomach, and rolled onto his side.

He heard a sudden rush of blood in his head.

He thought he heard someone screaming.

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Brian, Roger, Deaky and Jim were in fantastic spirits as they made their way up the path towards home.

Their informal meeting with John and Jim Beach - after Johnny Young had signed for their freedom - had gone well. Very well.

Jim had given John a list of dates when Queen could play at the Market Tavern.

John would also deal with his promoter, Mel Bush to line up gigs at the Rainbow, the Roundhouse, and Hammersmith Odeon.

John was also going to ingratiate himself with Roy and Sean. John would get more respect than the boys themselves had ever engendered, and would easily secure better studio slots.

Freddie and Brian had been inspired to write an immense amount of material during their illnesses, but it needed a lot more work, which the band could now undertake.

With his back turned, Roger put out a hand for the door handle, and was confused when he realised that the front door to the house was hanging open.
“Err….guys. Have we been robbed?” he asked tentatively stepping over the doorstep into the hallway.

Brian pointed to the basket on the floor. “If we have they have come bearing gifts” he said mystified, following behind Roger.

Roger crept to the bottom of the stairs and called out to Freddie, while Jim did a sweep of the kitchen and living room.

The boys’ valuable instruments seemed to be in place.

He tried the handle of the back door. It was still locked.

Roger crept up the stairs calling out to Freddie, but getting no response.

Roger was followed by a very nervous Brian, then Deaky.

Roger noticed the door to his own bedroom was closed while the door to Brian and Deaky’s room, and the bathroom stood open.

Roger tapped softly on the bedroom door before pushing it open, nervous of being confronted by a naked bottom…either Freddie’s or his latest beau.

Roger popped his head around the door, and screamed loudly.

Freddie was alone, naked, tied to the head of the bed, and shaking with convulsions.
Encounters: Wood for Trees

Chapter Summary

Jim is starting to lose his cool in the quest for Freddie’s heart, and his temper gets the better of him.

Freddie starts to realise there are people who love him – but is it enough to break lifelong habits?

Chapter Notes

Is Jim THE most patient, committed man on earth?? Lovies, I admit to shedding a tear while writing this 😔

Fear gripped Jim’s heart the second he heard the scream.

He didn’t talk much about his own life to these hopeful young men, but he had seen it all.

Young people – albeit usually women – alone with their boyfriends for the first time.

Their family returns home to find them raped and murdered in their beds.

Or pressured to try drugs for the first time – too much, a bad batch, found dead.

It wasn’t the first time Jim had heard a young man scream like Roger.

He wasn’t overly protective of the man he loved without cause.

He took the stairs two at a time, and braced himself on the landing for what he might find.

“Brian quick, grab his blanket, we can’t let Jim see him like this” whispered Roger.

“Prioritise Roger, hold his feet” whispered Brian in response.

Jim burst through the door.

The other men in the room were petrified for their young friend’s life.

Jim breathed a little easier, Freddie was still with them, there was still something he could do.

“Move back. Give him some space. Don’t restrain him. Roger, you’re not helping! Roll him on his side, that’s it, tilt his head back” Jim barked out instructions as he crossed the room.

“Deaky, grab Roger’s pillow, and Freddie’s, pop them under his head. Thank you.”

Jim went to sit on the bed beside Freddie.
“Don’t sit….he’s …” started Roger, not knowing how to finish.

“I know how the human body works Roger. People lose muscle control during seizures, it can be washed” snapped Jim.

Jim turned to Brian. “Brian have you got anything like…. bolt cutters?” Brian nodded and left the room, pleased to make himself useful.

“Deaky call an ambulance please.”

Within moments of the seizure losing its grip, Freddie slowly opened his eyes, and started to register his surroundings.

Jim picked up Freddie’s blanket and wrapped it tightly around him.

Crouching down beside his head, Jim stroked back Freddie’s hair, and said softly “You’re OK honey. Safe in your bed.”

Brian arrived in the nick of time, and with two loud clicks, he cut through the handcuffs.

“Here’s Brian now to make you comfy” said Jim.

Freddie didn’t even attempt to lower his arms. Jim could only assume he had lost feeling altogether, so he carefully pulled his arms down massaging the feeling back into them, taking care to avoid the open sores at his wrists.

“Can you tell me your name honey?” Jim asked softly.

Freddie smiled and whispered “Freddie” as though Jim were stupid.

Jim rubbed his shoulder.

“Good. Good.”

“And who’s this?” Jim pulled back slightly to allow Freddie to see Roger.

Freddie smiled and reached out a hand - that didn’t seem to want to cooperate - to his friend. “Roger!”

“What’s happening?” Freddie attempted to sit up, and grimaced when everything ached - which became a smile when it dawned on him why he ached.

Deaky shouted up the stairs. “I didn’t call the ambulance yet, but it’s arrived. I’ll show them up.”

Jim looked at Brian. It was a small redemption, but it seemed the boyfriend had called for the ambulance before he had scarpered.

“Ambulance?” said Freddie alarmed.

He struggled up to sitting, and tried to get out of the bed, wincing as his wrists caught on his blanket.

Jim grabbed him firmly and pushed him back into bed.

Freddie gripped Jim’s hand, eyes wide and frantic.

“Please don’t make me go to the hospital” he pleaded.
“Freddie I’m not having this argument with you again. You’re going to the hospital, and that’s final” Jim said firmly.

“No I won’t” he pouted. “You can’t make me, it’s my choice.”

Something inside Jim snapped.

“And look how that’s turned out for you so far” Jim roared. “No! I’ve had enough of doing this your way” he shouted “You’re doing it my way!”

Freddie paled and stared at Jim in shock, but shut up immediately.

Roger feeling decidedly uncomfortable, slipped from the room.

Jim jumped up, and Freddie made a grab for his hand, but he stormed from the room directing the paramedics to Freddie on his way out.

Jim stormed down the stairs and out of the back door, slamming it behind him.

He kicked over the dustbin, then turned his assault onto the fence.

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Brian calmly made his way outside.

Jim stood with his back to him, but Brian could see he was trembling.

He carefully touched Jim’s arm, and asked “Jim, are you OK?”

Jim swung around, his fist raised, but he dropped it instantly when he saw it was Brian.

Jim suddenly became aware of Freddie shouting from upstairs.

“How could they do this to him Brian?” Jim’s voice cracked with emotion.

Brian hung his head.

“He’s so fucking precious to me, and they treat him like shit!” Jim raked his hands through his hair. “He allows them to treat him like shit. He has so much fucking potential!”

Freddie’s shouts were becoming increasingly distressed.

Jim walked back towards the house, turning to Brian he said softly “I can’t listen to that.”

Calmly now, Jim opened the bedroom door and rushed to Freddie’s side. Freddie instantly buried his face in Jim’s chest.

The paramedics raised their eyebrows.

“Have you never seen two men before?” snapped Jim.

One of the men raised his hands, and Jim instantly felt remorse. They were just trying to help.
“I’m sorry. It’s been a trying day.”

Jim took a deep breath and addressed the paramedics calmly. “What’s the verdict?”

“We don’t know, he won’t let us examine him” said one of the men.

Jim shot Freddie a glare, and raised his eyebrows in challenge.

He turned back to the paramedics and explained. “I arrived home about fifteen minutes ago to find Freddie seizing. His arms were above his head. He recovered consciousness quickly, and his airway was clear.”

Jim glared at Freddie. “He’s going to allow you to examine him right now while I’m in the room.”

Jim always found Freddie difficult to read, but right then Jim thought he actually looked relieved, as he laid back against his pillows.

One of the paramedics fitted the blood pressure cuff, and put a thermometer in Freddie’s mouth. The other looked into his eyes.

“Have you eaten today?”

“Yes” said Freddie quickly.

“Freddie?” warned Jim.

“I have!” Freddie wailed, removing the thermometer. “Winnie and I had brownies…honest! He brought me a basket full of baked goodies. The basket is in the hallway, I pulled the brownies out of it, and ate them all. I needed my strength.” He winked at Jim.

It’s true. There was a basket in the hallway.

The paramedic removed the thermometer from Freddie’s hand and put it back in his mouth.

“Have you taken any illegal substances?”

“No.”

“Have you consumed any alcohol today?”

“No”

“Freddie?” Jim warned again.

Freddie pulled the thermometer out of his mouth.

“Oh yes…sorry….I forgot I had a vodka this morning, but nothing since…and I wasn’t drunk… just… braver.”

“That’s a matter of opinion” said Jim. He expression starting to soften.

“This morning?” said the paramedic looking at his watch.

Freddie nodded in earnest.

The paramedic took the thermometer out of Freddie’s hand again and shaking it at him said “If you keep removing this from your mouth, I’ll be forced to take a different approach.”
The men laughed, lightening the mood.

The second paramedic reached for Freddie’s wrist. He pulled it away sharply.

“Want me to put the handcuffs back on?” Jim warned, amusement shining from his eyes.

“Mmmm please” Freddie fluttered his eyelashes.

The paramedic sniggered.

“Any history of epilepsy? Headaches? Blurred vision, metallic taste in your mouth?”

Freddie shook his head.

The paramedic removed the cuff, and after a few moments the thermometer.

“Well, his temperature is raised, but there’s no immediate signs of toxins present. He’s bright as a button, not disorientated, or slurring his speech, and there is certainly nothing wrong with his lungs. In fact for someone who has just had a seizure, he’s in very good shape.”

Freddie turned to Jim “See, I don’t have to go to the hospital?” It sounded more like a question than a statement.

“Is there any reason for him to go to the hospital?” asked Jim.

“Well, there’s no risk to life presently, but I must stress that Freddie has suffered a cerebral event, and his heightened emotional state is highly unusual. The next course of action would be tests as an outpatient to find out what caused the seizure, but as long as he feels alright, there’s no reason for us to take him in now.”

“Yessss” hissed Freddie.

“In that case, I will say thank you very much, and not take up any more of your time.” Jim shook the paramedics hand.

Jim turned to Freddie and barked “Stay!”

Freddie saluted him, with a cheeky smile.

Secretly, he loved it when Jim took charge.

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Jim escorted the paramedics to the front door, shaking their hands again. “Thank you so much, and sorry for the unnecessary call out.”

“Not unnecessary. Seizures are not to be taken lightly. They are an interruption in the flow of information to and from the brain. Freddie was unnaturally distressed before you entered the room. That might be the place to start.” The paramedic shook Jim’s hand. “Good luck, he’s quite the character.”
Jim laughed. “Yes, my hands are full.”

Jim heard his name called from the living room. He popped his head around the door. The boys were all seated on the sofa, where Freddie liked to sit. Roger looked very pale, and was sipping on a glass of Freddie’s vodka. Brian had an arm around his shoulder.

“How is he?” whispered Roger. “Are they taking him in?”

“No. He’s actually alright. I’m just gonna try and find out what happened now. Wish me luck.”

“Good luck” said Brian.

“Roger…” Jim peered back around the door. “…Freddie is OK.”

Roger gave him a relieved smile.

Jim pushed open the bedroom door and walked back in.

Freddie was sitting where he had left him, wrapped in his blanket, staring into space. He looked tired, and Jim couldn’t help but feel sorry for losing his temper.

Jim sat on the bed beside him.

Freddie watched as Jim picked up the handcuffs, and dropped them softly again on the bed.

He chuckled and touched the back of his hand to Freddie’s hot cheek.

“I’m not going to ask you about this. I’ve been around the block…but I’d still be redder than you!”

Freddie giggled, his eyes sparkling. “It was so fucking good.”

“What happened then sweetheart? Please tell me the truth, did you take anything? I’m not your fucking Dad, I’ve been there Freddie. Be honest with me.”

“I didn’t take anything – I swear” Freddie suddenly looked like he was very far away in his mind.

“I don’t know what happened” he said quietly.

“Did he hurt you?” asked Jim.

Freddie shook his head vehemently. “No, No he didn’t. We had fun…..I think….but I don’t remember what happened……”

“Did you ask him to stop?”

“I don’t…..know. Since I couldn’t speak it gets mixed up … in my head. I don’t know what I said, or if I just said it in my head.” He thought some more, frowning as though trying to access a hidden file.
“I think I tried to get away…” Freddie looked at the sores at his wrists. “I must have done…but I don’t remember why. Winnie didn’t hurt me. Nothing hurts except for my wrists” he said raising his arms, as though suddenly realising he hadn’t received sufficient sympathy for those “…they really hurt! But I feel …fine….tired, and very thirsty.”

“I’ll get you some water in a moment. Do you remember talking about it….before you….?” Jim could feel himself blushing, as though he was suddenly Freddie’s age again.

Freddie looked confused.

Jim decided to use the direct route. “Did you use your safe word?”

“What do you mean?” Freddie asked sincerely.

“Do you understand what those are….safe words?” Jim asked becoming increasingly alarmed. “Did you talk about what you wanted to try, and what you really would not do?”

Freddie tilted his head, looking quizzically at Jim.

“Words that you both agree on before you put yourself in a very vulnerable position that you cannot easily get out of? What you don’t want to do, or don’t like?” Jim attempted to clarify.

“Why wouldn’t I want to do something?” asked Freddie with a small voice.

Jim was absolutely floored, but tried not to alienate Freddie by showing his horror.

“Well….we don’t all like doing everything do we?” he said casually. “I can tell you now, I don’t like certain things, and I won’t do them.”

Freddie eyes flashed with amusement “Oooh what like? Do tell?” he said clapping his hands together.

Jim blushed and chuckled “Never you mind!”

Jim continued. “You were completely powerless Freddie. How well do you know this bloke? It’s very important that you trust your partner before trying things like this.”

Freddie appeared to be deep in thought, so Jim thought he would try another angle while he had his attention.

“How do you think me, Brian, Roger, and Deaky feel seeing you so powerless, and in danger like that?” Jim asked gently. “I don’t want to guilt you sweetheart, but every time you put yourself in danger like this, you hurt the people who love you.”

There. He had said it out loud.

Freddie looked pensive for a few minutes before he said with genuine surprise “I didn’t know that anyone cared.”

“What about Roger, finding you unconscious like that? He cares very much.”

Freddie raised his fore finger in objection. “I was poorly. That wasn’t my fault”

“Yes, you were, but there is only one man who can really tell us what happened isn’t there…and he’s not here. There’s no shame in experimenting Freddie, but please protect yourself.”
Freddie was thinking very deeply, but Jim could tell he was tired, and decided not to push it for today.

“Want a shower?” he asked, wanting to get Freddie out of the bed before he realised it wasn’t clean.

Freddie nodded, but didn’t make a move to get up.

After a moment he turned to Jim, wrapping his arms around his neck, Freddie looked into Jim’s eyes with such sincerity and barely audibly said “Thank you.” He pressed his lips against Jim’s in a slow tender kiss on his lips.

Jim leaned his forehead against Freddie’s.

“Always darling” whispered Jim softly.

As soon as Jim heard the shower running, he stripped the sheets off the bed and rushed downstairs to put them in the washing machine.

The boys were still in the living room awaiting news.

Jim popped his head around the door. “Brian, where’s your washing powder, and Freddie’s clean bedding please?”

Brian jumped up. “I’ll help you mate.”

“Quick before he gets out of the shower.”

When Jim was satisfied that all was in order, he rolled up Freddie’s blanket neatly as he had seen him do a thousand times before, and headed downstairs for a cup of tea.

He popped his head around the living room door. “Anyone want a cuppa?”

Deaky jumped up. “I really don’t think that’s your job Jim. Sit down please. You’ve literally been a life saver today. I mean it. What would we have done without you?!”

Jim suddenly did feel tired, and he sunk down onto the sofa gratefully.

After they had finished their tea, and Freddie has still not made an appearance, Jim headed back up the stairs.

Freddie was sitting on the end of his bed wearing just a clean pair of shorts, with the water from his wet hair dripping down his torso.

He looked up when Jim entered the room.

Jim resisted the urge to push him onto his back, and smoother him in kisses.

“I can’t go down” Freddie said sadly.
“Why not sweetheart? The boys are dying to know you’re OK. They want to jam. I’m not singing, and Deaky says I sing better than he does, so come on, shake a leg.” Jim tried to inject some humour into the moment.

“I can’t. They saw the handcuffs… and the seizure.”

They saw a lot more than that, thought Jim, but hoped the boys would be sensitive enough never to mention it.

Jim leaned over the balcony and called Roger loudly.

Roger sprinted up the stairs, concerned that something was terribly wrong. He popped his head around the door “Freddie?”

“There you go…” said Jim. “…Roger’s seen you. We can jam now yeah?”

Freddie rolled his eyes as Roger pulled him up from the bed by his sore arm, and together they made their way downstairs.

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“I get down on my knees, and I start to pray, ‘til the tears run down from my eyes. Lord, somebody…..ooh somebody…..please anybody find me somebody to love.”

Freddie was playing his piano, repeating the lines over and over again. Everybody looked at Jim.

“Ever thought they might be closer than you think?!” muttered Deaky sarcastically under his breath.

“What’s that Fred?” asked Brian. “Have you been working on something else new?”

Freddie nodded, his cheeks flushed “…but it’s not right!” he whaled in frustration. “I want it to sound like Aretha Franklin…..gospel.”

“It’s very new Fred. It’ll come” soothed Brian.

Freddie shook his head sadly.

“It will! How many times do we have this discussion? It’s only a few weeks since you couldn’t sing a note, now look at you, composing new stuff. I have every faith it’s going to be fantastic” said Brian sincerely.

Deaky began strumming a new riff on the bass.

Freddie got up, and quietly closed the piano lid.

He picked up the acoustic guitar and sat beside Jim on the sofa repeating a number of chords “This
thing called love, I just…I can’t handle it…”

Roger beat out a melody on the chair arm. He looked around. “I need my drum kit”

Jim felt a head land softly on his shoulder, and smiled to himself.

Roger launched himself out of his chair frantically, and knelt down beside the sofa. “Shit! Jim, Freddie’s gone again.”

Jim smiled softly and wrapped an arm around Freddie’s shoulder. “Sleeping peacefully. Seizures are extremely tiring on the body. I’m amazed he’s lasted this long. That melody will sound perfect to him when he’s had some rest.”

“How is that not a relationship?!” said Deaky pointing to Freddie snuggled against Jim’s side.

Jim suddenly realised why Brian had introduced Deaky as their strong silent type. He didn’t say much, but when he did, it was always on point.

Jim smiled and gave Freddie a squeeze, pressing a kiss to his temple.

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Both Freddie and Jim leapt out of their skin when there was a loud frantic knock on the front door.

Jim looked down at Freddie, who seemed to have settled back down to sleep, when there was another loud rap, this time on the living room window.

Bill’s angry face could be seen through it, pointing at Freddie to come out now.

Jim gently laid Freddie’s head down on the cushion, and leaped up, flying towards the front door practically tearing it off its hinges.

Brian, Roger and Deaky looked at each other worriedly, and followed him.

Within seconds Jim gripped Bill by the front of his shirt and was pushing him down the path. He no longer cared that Bill had seen him embracing his boyfriend, all he cared about was Freddie.

“You’re so fucking loud!!” Jim roared. “No. Freddie will not come out, he’s not well, and you will……”

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Freddie had been awakened by the loud knocking, but he had hoped that if he kept his eyes shut the others might leave him to his privacy.

He carefully opened one eye to check he was alone.

Satisfied that he was, he crawled down the sofa and reached for the telephone on the table at the end,
and dialed.

“Winnie?” he whispered. “Is that you?”

“No. I’m at home. I’m fine.”

“I don’t know what happened…..no, I’m not a fucking epileptic….”

“They were cut off me…..”

“Don’t worry darling, it wasn’t your fault.”

“No. I just wanted to check that you will still take me to Peter’s party this evening? Please?”

“No! I don’t need to go to the hospital…..”

“No, I won’t be pathetic…..”

“Please?”

“Thank you. I really appreciate it. No! Please don’t come here. Meet me at the end of the road at 7.30 pm…..”

Freddie heard the front door slam, and voices in the hallway.

“Jim, you’re losing it my friend.” Freddie heard Brian’s voice. “I never thought I’d be pulling you off another man….Roger maybe…but never you. Go and see to your knuckles before Freddie wakes. I’ll check he’s OK.”

Brian popped his head around the living room door.

Freddie was fast asleep where they had left him, covered by his blanket.

*****************************************************

Freddie crept down the stairs carefully. His platform shoes in one hand.

He was wearing his favourite jeans, which had slipped on a little easier today, as he had barely eaten all day.

His head hurt a little, but he was very excited about the party.

When Peter had invited him to his birthday party, Freddie was convinced he wouldn’t make it because he didn’t know anyone, and he couldn’t possibly go alone.

Winnie was the perfect plus one. Everybody who had been at Provans that night knew him, and he was loud, and direct enough for the both of them.

Freddie was keen to meet with Peter again. He needed to get his name out there. To be known. He wondered if the media would attend the party.
Freddie stopped at the bottom of the stairs to put his shoes on, and just as he got his hand to the door handle, Jim came out of the kitchen with a cup of tea.

Freddie thought Jim had gone home for the day. He saw him pack his things together earlier.

“Would you like a cuppa?” asked Jim, and then stopped dead in his tracks when he saw what Freddie was wearing.

“Freddie, you are never going out! You need to rest. Come on, don’t be silly, we’ll have a nice cup of tea, and watch one of those Marx Brothers movies you like?”

“I need to go to Peter’s party, Jim. I promised him, and John would really like me to go.” Freddie said quickly, his eyes to the ground.

“I’m sure Peter and John would understand Freddie. You’ve had a seizure today. You need to look after yourself” Jim said kindly. He put his arm out to Freddie “come on, for me.”

“I c-can’t Jim. Winnie is waiting for me down the road” Freddie stammered.

“Winnie?? As in the man who left you for dead this afternoon, tied to a bed post?” snapped Jim harshly.

Freddie couldn’t raise his head. He couldn’t face Jim’s disappointment.

“You must really fucking hate yourself” yelled Jim.

Freddie snatched open the door, and ran out before Jim could hear him sob.

Complete fucking failure. Freddie had been right all along. Jim could never love him. Not really. He had screwed up their relationship, and it hadn’t even started.

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Jim stormed into the living room, slammed the door, and turned out the lights.

He couldn’t face anybody.

His throat was suddenly agony, and he couldn’t breathe for the pain.

The room was in blackness, and there wasn’t a sound, but that didn’t stop the painful whirring of his thoughts.

What if Freddie had another seizure?

What if he didn’t make it to the end of the road to meet Winnie?

What if Winnie left him unwell and alone?

What if a stranger found him and took advantage?

What if Freddie never came home?

What if… what if… what if……Freddie was never his?

Jim laid his head on Freddie’s blanket and wept.
Encounters: Not Tonight, Come Tomorrow

Chapter Summary

Jim starts to question his role in Freddie’s life, when a carefree afternoon spent with his favourite boys refreshes his take on his own.

Freddie experiences an epiphany, but finds himself trapped between two men – one that harms his spirit, and the other his body.

Chapter Notes

Lovies – it’s darkest before the dawn.

Light was creeping around the edge of the curtains when he heard the sound.

Footsteps on the stairs, the whistle of the kettle, the chink of china cups, and finally Freddie wandering into the room.

It shouldn’t please Jim as much as it did – the fact that Freddie couldn’t sleep – but it was to Jim he came, and Jim felt validated.

Jim had long since learned not to ask Freddie what was on his mind, what was wrong.

Freddie was not a talker.

In fact, Jim had to assume that everything was perfect in Freddie’s world at all times, such was his inability to intentionally let his guard down in front of anyone.

To say ‘hey, I need you to help me’, ‘this isn’t right’ or ‘I don’t feel well today’.

It always happened by accident – a last resort – something that couldn’t be hidden any longer.


Freddie had made tea for himself and Jim.

He never actually woke Jim– they never spoke at all.

He would drag the coffee table towards the sofa, and Jim would automatically shuffle up so Freddie – wrapped in his blanket - could sit down.

Freddie would rest his head on Jim’s shoulder, and open his song book.

He would scribble for an hour or so until daybreak, and the rest of the household awoke.

Sometimes it was lyrics, sometimes poetry, sometimes doodles.
Then there were the other times; the times he would attempt to write music.

For all his musical genius, Freddie played by ear. He didn’t read music that well, and it took him a long time to decipher it - much to his own frustration.

Freddie was not a patient man.

That was Jim’s clue – his key to reading Freddie.

If Freddie tried to write music, he would become frustrated, which lead Jim to think he was frustrated about something in his life. Something he could lose in a sea of minims and crotchets.

Jim was very surprised that Freddie had chosen that morning to come to him, considering their cross words of the night before.

When he thought about it, perhaps he wasn’t that surprised - Freddie was so softhearted that he couldn’t hold a grudge for long.

If he could forgive a man for leaving him convulsing and tied to a bed post, then he could forgive Jim for his outburst.

Freddie also struggled to say sorry. It was easier to make tea, and give hugs.

Jim accepted those as valid currency.

************************************************************************

Jim took his coffee out onto the patio.

It was a balmy summers day, but Jim was not in good spirits.

He was starting to wonder how much longer he should hang around.

He saw the way people looked at him.


He knew his love for Freddie was obvious to everyone but Freddie.

He had to be an adult about it.

While he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he would love Freddie for the rest of his life, he had to accept that Freddie may never love him back.

Paul Prenter, Bill Reid, Winnie Kirchberger– different men, but the same man – hard, sly, morose, manipulative, neglectful, even violent.

Not one of them smart enough to notice that the rock star they’d fucked disappeared when the clock struck twelve.

Jim may have to accept that this was the kind of man that Freddie was drawn to.

The kind of man he could never be for Freddie.
Jim tried to picture his life without Freddie in it.

He instantly felt a lump in his throat, and a burning sensation along his cheekbones into his eyes.

He couldn’t.

He couldn’t imagine his life without the Queen boys either.

Their lives had become intertwined in such a way that Jim spent most nights on the sofa, and rarely ever went home.

His job at the bar was now secondary to his unpaid band assistant role, and he would turn down paid shifts to help out.

Brian pulled out the chair beside Jim, sensing his mood he asked “Do you mind company mate? Or would you rather be alone.”

“No, you’re fine Brian. In fact if you don’t mind, I wouldn’t mind an ear?” said Jim softly looking around, hoping not to be overheard.

“He’s out – playing tennis with Peter.” Brian second guessed Jim was trying not to be overheard by Freddie.

Jim took a deep breath staring into the distance.

“Is it Freddie?” asked Brian.

“Hole in one.” Jim nodded with a humourless smile.

“I’m at a crossroads. I know he’s the one for me Brian. I know.” Jim looked into Brian’s eyes sincerely, “But I don’t know how much longer I can do this. You’re a man of science; there has to be some form of progress, a measurable outcome…”

“Jim…” Brian started, not sure he could cope with the rest of Jim’s thought. “…Freddie cares for you deeply.”

“I know he does Brian. He’s a fierce friend. He’s the most loyal and affectionate friend I’ve ever had, but it’s not enough. If it was a case of waiting for him to be ready, or to mature a little into the relationship I would give him as much time as he needs, but it’s the string of shit boyfriends Bri!”

Jim took a deep breath to steady himself.

“I’m a human band aid. I assess the damage, patch him up, wipe up tears, and off he goes to the next disaster. I feel like I’m missing something very important. He’s not just kind, and considerate. He had a seizure yesterday Brian – not a headache, or a cold - a cerebral fucking event, and he put Peter and…Winnie first. It’s …..it’s…” Jim grappled for words “…self-sabotage.”

Brian didn’t know what to say. It was all true.

“Everyone has noticed it. He’s unhappy. His relationship with Roger is not what it was. Roger is nervous to be around Freddie with Bill or Winnie in case he punches one of them! He’s withdrawing further and further into himself. How long before he’s mute again Brian? That was a truly terrifying period. The cheeky humour is gone. He frowns more than he smiles. I crave for the days he used to wind me so tight I squeaked.” Jim exhaled sharply.

Brian nodded. “Ironically the band is going from strength to strength. He’s producing phenomenal
music Jim, and you should have heard him in the last meeting. He’s growing in business. He pinned Sean to the wall with just his eyes!”

Jim chuckled.

“Who is this Peter?” Jim shrugged. “Tell me he’s not mixing another man into the folding?”

Brian smiled. “No… actually. Peter is a very good friend of John Reid.” He chuckled. “Picture Freddie, but ten times as cocky.”

“My God!” Jim rolled his eyes laughing. “Help us all!”

“Peter’s good for him Jim. You should meet him actually. They do things other than get drunk and get laid. Freddie didn’t say much about his birthday party last night, but I got the feeling that was more to do with Winnie than Peter. You should ask him about it– if he talks to anyone, it’s you. He mentioned that Peter is a phenomenal singer.”

Jim nodded. “Sounds like a healthier way for Freddie to spend his time.”

Brian drained the last of the coffee from the cup, and stood.

“Just so you know Jim, I will consider it more than just Freddie’s loss if you decide you can’t be around us anymore.”

Jim smiled. “Thank you Brian. I think I needed to hear that more than you know. Perhaps I will just go home for a couple of nights. Spend some time in the flat, re calibrate. It’s been a hell of a long time since I slept a night through.”

Jim nodded to himself. “Yes, when we have done with the band stuff for the day I’ll head off. Freddie will be with Bill, or Winnie, or Joe Bloggs. He won’t even notice me leaving.”

Brian smiled to himself at the irony.

Jim was so loyal, that even when he was feeling neglected he would still assist the band with their day.

Jim isn’t going anywhere thought Brian.

He knew the pair of them too well. Jim was too loyal and wholly in love, and Freddie – well just wait to see how Freddie would react when he felt someone try to escape from his web.

Although, it might just be the kick up the backside Freddie needs.

No, Brian smiled to himself. Jim just THOUGHT he might escape, the reality would be somewhat different.

Freddie was in great spirits when he arrived home from tennis.

His smile grew even wider when he looked out of the window, and saw what was going on in the garden.
Jim, Brian, Roger and Deaky had such fond memories of their day in Brighton, that they thought they would recreate their picnic in the back garden.

Brian was laying out the chequered blanket. Roger was setting out the plastic plates, cups and cutlery.

Deaky and Jim were wearing aprons and comparing their barbecue techniques.

“What time is Freddie due back?” shouted Roger to the others. “He doesn’t want to miss this.”

Freddie rushed out of the back door and nearly knocked Roger on his back with an enormous hug. Maybe his friends really did care after all.

After a few moments Roger pulled back and looked down at Freddie. “What’s the matter?” he asked concerned. “What’s that for?”

Freddie shook his head. “Nothing” he said with a shy smile.

“Who wants champagne?” shouted Freddie.

“No money Fred” said Deaky.

“Yes, money Deaks” said Freddie with an enormous grin spreading across his face. “John gave me some cash last night – for expenses – this counts doesn’t it?”

Everybody laughed.

After a few hard months, maybe things were looking up after all.

They were all together.

They were all well.

Freddie laid back against the tree with a loud groan, rubbing his stomach.

“Argh, my God! I’ve not eaten that much in ages!” he whined.

“Fred, you ate some chicken” said Deaky dryly.

“I know…” he wailed “…a whole one!”

Jim laughed. He loved how dramatic Freddie could be.

“What I want to know is how anyone can play tennis wearing all white, and come home immaculately clean” ribbed Jim.

Freddie poked his tongue out with a smile. “I’ll have you know Mr Hutton, I won.”

“Of course you did. If your arm had fallen off you’d not have quit” Jim said sarcastically.
It was a low blow, but Jim had still not fully recovered from the events of the day before.

Roger came out of the kitchen carrying a box full of their pans.

“Where are they going Rog?” Brian raised an eyebrow.

“You’ll see.” He disappeared back into the house, and re-appeared minutes later with the Red Special, Deaky’s guitar, the acoustic guitar, and Freddie’s hairbrush.

He laid everything out on the blanket, as Brian removed the empty plates, and laid out the various size pans in the style of his drums.

He looked at them quizzically then stretched up to grab the dirty barbecue tongs, satisfied at the sound they made when they hit the pans.

Jim also re-appeared from the house with Freddie’s rolled up blanket under his arm.

Freddie’s eyes were closed, and he had a cigarette hanging from his mouth, but he didn’t seem to mind Jim pulling him away from the tree to pop the blanket behind his head.

Without opening his eyes, Freddie’s face brightened, and he chuckled “You were like a baby fast asleep on my blanket when I got home last night. It took me ages to pull it out from under your head without waking you up. Then I got the giggles” he confessed.

“You should have crawled in beside me” said Jim with a smile.

Freddie became serious. “I didn’t think you would want to see me again last night. You were cross with me. I don’t like it when you are cross with me.”

“Yes Freddie, I’m not going to lie, I was very cross with you” Jim said gently. “…but only because….because ….I care…” Jim’s voice tapered.

Both men were quiet for a couple of minutes. Then Jim couldn’t help chuckling as he laid a hand carefully on Freddie’s stomach.

Freddie whimpered.

“You’re like an infant with a pot belly. You know, if you ate a bit more every day that wouldn’t happen?” Jim said with humour.

Freddie whined “I bet I won’t fit in my stage costume tomorrow now.”

“You will, and you’ll look fantastic, and you’ll have more energy because you ate well today.” Jim assured him. “How are you feeling anyway?”

Freddie smiled “I really enjoyed tennis. I had forgotten how good it was to bash fuck out of a ball.”

“Jim did some of that himself yesterday” muttered Roger looking up from his pseudo drum kit.

“Have you spoken to Bill today Freddie?”

Freddie shook his head quickly, but didn’t elaborate.

“I think I need to make it up to Winnie though” he said with a small voice, sitting up, and chewing on his nail.
Jim gasped, and locked eyes with Roger. “I can’t imagine any circumstances under which you would ever owe Winnie anything sweetheart.”

“I don’t think he enjoyed the party much last night though” said Freddie.

“Did you enjoy it?” asked Jim.

Freddie nodded. “Very much. Peter knows so many people. I hung out in the kitchen at first because I didn’t really know anyone, and I wasn’t sure how to introduce myself, but Winnie said I was boring. Then Peter wanted to sing, and he needed a pianist, so he came and got me, and introduced me to all his friends. Peter has an amazing voice. Really unique you know.”

“So, why do you owe Winnie?” asked Jim, half thinking he would be better off not asking the question.

“He was bored I think. He doesn’t sing, and he said he had more important things to do than hang out with wannabe rock stars. He wanted us to leave early.”

“Did you leave early – even though you were enjoying your evening?” asked Jim quietly.

Freddie nodded, and blushed. “I’m glad Peter and I played tennis this morning though. Gave me a chance to apologise for being rude.”

Roger started to thrash the pans angrily.

“So, tomorrow, I want us to do Flick of the Wrist” said Roger continuing to thrash the pans, bits of burnt meat flying from the tongs. “We haven’t done it on stage yet, and I think John needs to see us do some new stuff. We’ve been so controlled around him, we need to loosen up a little, rock out like we used to.”

“Good idea Rog” Brian nodded. “He’s invested a shitload of capital in us, we need to show him we’re serious.”

“You’ve done loads Brian” added Freddie. “Remember all that stuff we worked on while you were in hospital? I can put the vocals down now I have my voice back.”

Roger threw Freddie’s hairbrush at him. “On you go then.” Freddie rolled onto his back kicking his feet in the air with laughter.

He became serious as another thought occurred to him, “We haven’t used the Deaky amp in the Market Tavern before. It’s going to go off!” His eye flashed with excitement. “Let’s do Stone Cold Crazy, and Lap of the Gods.”

“What’s security going to be like tomorrow Jim?” asked Brian.

“We’re getting some other lads in. Unfortunately I’m going to be working behind the bar, so I won’t get to see you much.”

Freddie pouted. Jim squeezed his hand, conveniently forgetting to let go afterwards.

Jim was delighted as the scene unfolded before him.

His feelings from earlier in the day seemed completely unfounded as he watched Freddie - looking little more than a teen - valued and nurtured in this unlikely group of men.

He wished his life could always be like this.
As if the day couldn’t get any more perfect, Deaky appeared in the doorway with the chocolate fondue, and a bowlful of strawberries.

As full as he declared himself to be, Jim knew that Freddie wouldn’t be able to resist the chocolate covered strawberries – especially if Jim fed him by hand.

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It didn’t escape Jim’s attention that Freddie looked decidedly uncomfortable when the gate latch clicked, and Winnie strode up the path.

He didn’t look like a man pleased to see his boyfriend at all.

“I thought you were meeting me after tennis!” Winnie barked ignoring the other men in their own garden.

Freddie couldn’t bring himself to say anything, but Roger jumped to his feet, barbecue tongs in hand.

Brian grabbed him. “We don’t know what happened yet Rog” said Brian, ever the diplomat. “You can’t keep hitting people, and asking questions later. You’ll be arrested eventually, and we can’t do without you. Let Freddie sort it out.”

Jim busied himself with cleaning the barbecue, his back to Freddie and Winnie, but his senses alert to trouble.

Jim was shocked. After the handcuffs - safe word debacle, Jim had assumed Winnie to be young like Freddie. Trying things out for the first time. He was surprised to see a man easily his own age, if not older, and he felt his hackles rise.

Winnie should have looked after the younger man - a lot better than he had.

“You said you’d come to work with me this evening remember. I’m a very important member of the team, I haven’t time to run around after you.” he barked.

“Off you fuck then” snapped Jim, turning to face Winnie unable to help himself.

“Well fuck me!” exclaimed Winnie. “If it’s not my ugly twin.” Winnie looked around laughing, as though acknowledging the presence of the other men for the first time. He didn’t find any warmth in their faces.

“Did you find the keys?” asked Jim angrily

“Keys??” said Winnie mimicking Jim’s tone.

“Yeah, you know, for the handcuffs that you left Freddie chained to the bed head with while he clung onto life” Jim spat.

Jim regretted his words the minute they were out.

There were times Jim felt he acted too much like a parent to Freddie.

Not a natural role for Jim, but a void in Freddie that he seemed to be repeatedly drawn into.
This was one of those times.

The protective Father role.

He could see that Freddie was drowning in humiliation at Jim’s words, and he was overcome with remorse.

That day was a subject matter that was far too sensitive for Freddie to have ever raised for himself.

Jim had overstepped.

That wasn’t his place.

“Handcuffs….” blustered Winnie “well…it was a funny story, but I wasn’t even there that day” he lied.

Freddie slowly rose to his feet, and started to tidy the dessert bowls away, desperate to escape this particular kind of attention.

“Come on Freddie!” Winnie protested. “I’ve got stuff to do.”

Winnie pushed Freddie in the direction of the gate, but it was a little too forcefully.

Freddie lurched forward trying to regain balance, but with a shriek tumbled heavily onto his knees, putting his hands out to break his fall.

Jim was on the ground beside him in seconds.

Roger took his opportunity; forcing the much larger man’s back to the brick barbecue. “He’s a fucking pianist you moron!” he growled.

Unexpectedly, Freddie recovered quickly. He leaned his back to Jim’s chest as though he instinctively knew that Jim would be there for him.

Jim expected Freddie to be upset. Expected him to be embarrassed, but with a transformation as startling as the day Jim had opened the door to a timid, stammering version of Freddie, a dignified man appeared from Freddie’s young face. The young, old man looked Jim courageously in the eye and said “I’m tired of this shit.”

And he was.

Jim truly believed he was.

Jim’s mind reverted to the conversation he’d had with Brian that morning, and he was overcome with an atavistic sense of being exactly where he was meant to be.


Freddie reached out his hand and settled it lightly on Winnie’s arm.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to ruin your evening darling” Freddie said sadly.
“There’s always something with you isn’t there?! Tonight was meant to be MY night, but no, you have to be the big shot rock star! Weeks…weeks I’ve been working on those new dishes. The new menu was meant to be THE focal point tonight. The centre of everyone’s attention. Why can’t you just sit beside me? Support me for a change? And eat the fucking food Freddie! How do you think it looks when my own boyfriend doesn’t even eat the fucking food! Do you need me to feed you, like a fucking baby.” Winnie’s petulant face was pushed up close to Freddie’s.

Freddie took a step back.

“I didn’t know how special tonight was for you darling” he carefully curled his fingers around Winnie’s.

“We had a barbecue at the house this afternoon, I couldn’t fit in another thing. I’m sorry. If I’d have known I wouldn’t have eaten at the barbecue.”

Freddie attempted to tuck himself close to Winnie’s body, gazing up at him adoringly. “Darling we’ll do something tomorrow OK? I promise. Whatever you want. I promise to support you, and I won’t sing – even if I’m begged. Please forgive me.”

Freddie reached up on tiptoes to kiss Winnie’s nose, but Winnie stepped back abruptly his hands held up.

“No! It’s all ruined now. I’m done with you for tonight. Just fuck off!” Winnie snapped, and turning on his heels storming off, leaving Freddie alone in the darkness.

Freddie stared after Winnie for a long while, his eyes to the ground, tears welling.

He desperately wanted to run after him. To beg to be forgiven. He couldn’t bear this feeling that someone he cared for was cross with him, and that it was all his fault.

Freddie’s mind flashed back to the evening before when Jim had yelled at him too.

It had hurt so much.

Seconds after he had stepped out of the house, Freddie had wanted to sneak back in. Take off his shoes and creep onto the sofa beside Jim. Unexpectedly he had imagined himself covering Jim in sweet little kisses until he softened, the way he did when Freddie was being willful. Until he accepted Freddie’s apology and pulled him into his arms the way Freddie loved.

He hadn’t been able to do that.

Freddie had not been able to stem his tears.

He hated when he cried.

It was pathetic.

All those years at boarding school being taught to stand tall, head up, keep a stiff upper lip, don’t let the opposition know when they had hurt you, but he still whimpered like a little girl.

It was pitiful.

Jim had been right, Freddie did hate himself.
Bill watched Freddie wave Jim off at the corner.
Staring after him like a lovesick puppy.
He fucking knew it.
He’d known it all along.
Jim was fucking Freddie.
Freddie had lied to him.
That’s why Freddie had been avoiding him.
That why Jim had seen him off the property yesterday. He thought he could keep Freddie all for himself.
Not a fucking chance.
Him and Freddie were good together.
They were electric in bed.
Jim couldn’t have him. Freddie belonged to him.
He would show him.
Bill watched Freddie walk slowly towards him. Head down, eyes to the ground, hands in his pockets.
He always did that, tried to hide himself.
Freddie was gorgeous.
He was always showing Freddie how crazy he made him in bed. He could never get enough. Freddie was intoxicating. No amount of vigorous thrusting would ever be enough. No sooner had he come, he was ready again. Freddie did that to him.
Bill took in what Freddie was wearing this evening. He looked like a slut. Bill was always telling him that. It had been a while since Freddie had been to Bill’s house, but Bill often chose his clothes for him. Dressed him up like his own little doll, and my God, he’d looked good.
Bill could see Freddie was wearing eyeliner, and was that…lipstick? He didn’t need to wear all that now, he’d already told him. Freddie didn’t need to impress anyone else now he was his.
Bill waited until Freddie drew close to him before stepping out of the shadows.
He reached out a hand and touched Freddie’s arm. Freddie leapt back out of his grasp with a yelp.
There it was. That energy. That atmosphere. The tension. It crackled between them just by standing in the same space.

Bill smiled dryly.

“Freddie hi. I didn’t know you would be here tonight” he lied, just footsteps from Freddie’s front door.

“Good thing I saw you, you don’t have to go home with Jim now, you can come back with me. Come on.” Bill gripped Freddie’s arm and tried to pull him along, but Freddie’s feet were glued to the floor.

“J-Jim? I haven’t seen Jim?” stammered Freddie, not able to meet Bill’s eyes.

He looked towards the front door of the terrace. If he could just get home, he’d be safe.

Bill couldn’t believe his ears. How stupid did Freddie think he was?!

He pointed down the road. “Don’t even Freddie! I have just seen you wave him off. Gave him a kiss and a cuddle did you?” he said sarcastically.

“I’ve been at…at the studio” lied Freddie. “I’ve been unwell today. Having seizures. I was at the hospital earlier. I’ve got behind on my work.”

If Bill thought Freddie was having medical tests, he might think twice about hurting him. Someone would notice.

Freddie started to walk towards home.

Bill grabbed his hand.

“I’ve just seen you Freddie. At the end of the road. Do you think I’m stupid?” yelled Bill.

“Oh!” said Freddie smiling realising Bill’s mistake. “That wasn’t Jim. That was …Winfried….he works at the studio. He lives the next street over.”

Freddie shocked himself at how easily the lies flowed, but that didn’t matter now. Freddie could see the murderous glint in Bill’s eye.

Freddie turned to go home. He had got three steps closer to safety when Bill grabbed him again.

“Come on. We haven’t seen each other for ages” he whined jealously. “Not that I’m happy that you’re fucking other men, but you just need to be reminded of how good we are together.”

Freddie turned to him and gave him a hug. “Bill, honey, I’m not fucking other men” he purred.

“There is only you darling, and I’m sorry I’ve been quiet, but I’ve not been very well, and I’m under doctors orders to rest.” Freddie stroked a finger down his chest. “Now, why don’t you go on home, I’ll go to bed now, and I’ll be brighter tomorrow, we’ll do something special OK? Just you and I?”

Bill grasped Freddie’s hand in a bone splinter grip. “You do think I’m fucking stupid. I let you go now, and you’ll disappear.” His face was twisted in anger.

Freddie looked up into Bill’s face, and wondered what he had ever seen in him.

He had been a one night stand.
A handsome creature.

A man willing to scratch an itch.

Large enough to possess and control him.

Now Freddie just felt possessed, controlled, and terribly terribly frightened.

Freddie heard voices behind him and he turned to see a couple walking on the other side of the street.

He looked at his own hand grasped in Bill’s, and back to the couple, his eyes pleading with them for help.

Bill must have seen it too, as he quickly dropped Freddie’s hand, and turned with a smile to say good night to the couple.

Freddie ran.

He counted his footfalls, knowing he wasn’t far from the safety of his home.

That each count took him further from Bill, that angry face, and another beating.

He couldn’t breathe, but he propelled himself on wards.

The mild pain he’d had in his head since the seizure intensified greatly, and he felt he would lose his vision.

He heard the click of the gate, rather than saw himself opening it.

He fumbled in his pocket for the key, as his white door grew larger, closer. Five steps….five, four, three, two, the key was in the lock, he heard it click….

Suddenly he was launched bodily into the door with a hard shove from behind.

Thunder echoed through his head as it connected with the door.

He closed his eyes, waiting for the black spots, for consciousness to fade, but it didn’t.

He was wide awake.

Bill gripped his shoulders, and span him violently to face him. Pushing his back painfully into the door handle, fingers gripped at his throat.

“You cannot escape me Freddie” he growled, his face just inches from Freddie’s.

Freddie broke his own golden rule. The rule he had made for himself the day he had taken his first boxing lesson. He heard himself sob loudly.

“Don’t look so fucking scared” Bill growled close to his ear. “I’ve never really hurt you. You love a bit of passion, and you know it.”

Freddie’s arm had been twisted up his back when Bill had forced him against the door, but suddenly Freddie saw an opportunity.

He raised his arm and pulled on the door handle.

The door flew open and Freddie span quickly, deftly stepping over the doorstep.
He threw his weight against the door to slam it shut, but Bill had squeezed half of his body through the space.

Freddie thrust his hand into Bill’s face, pushing as hard as he could, gouging his fingers into Bill’s eyes.

Inexplicable pain shot through his hand.

Freddie yowled, and Bill took his advantage, forcing open the door.

Freddie felt his hand had been freed, but that didn’t stop it throbbing, and blood was dripping onto the floor.

Freddie couldn’t bear to look.

He looked up at Bill’s face instead, not understanding.

There was blood around his mouth, and a wild look in his eye.

Bill slammed the door shut behind them, clicking the latch locking them both inside.

He grabbed Freddie’s jaw “You and I are going to have a little talk.”
Encounters: The End

Chapter Summary

Freddie is held captive by boyfriend Bill Reid, and it’s not looking likely that Queen’s gig will go ahead. Jim snatches a precious moment, before being confronted by his fears, but will Freddie let Jim help him?

Chapter Notes

Things will get better loovies, I promise!

Freddie’s head was heavy. He lifted it just high enough to be able to raise his eyes the rest of the way up to the clock on the wall.

Four fifty in the morning.

Freddie couldn’t be sure what time Bill had pushed him through the door, and locked him terrified in his own home.

He felt his head roll forward onto his chest. He breathed shallowly.

Bill was still talking.

Freddie couldn’t make out what he was saying, but he could hear that Bill’s tone was more gentle now.

Perhaps he had screamed himself out too.

Freddie had long since stopped talking.

He had shouted himself hoarse.

It was pointless saying anything anyway. Bill hadn’t listened to a word he had said, and most of what Bill had said didn’t make any sense.

Bill had asked him about places he had never been to, people he didn’t know, people he was supposed to have fucked.

Of course Freddie denied it all.

He didn’t know who those people were – what was he supposed to say?

The more he denied, the angrier Bill got.

Bill had screamed in his face for hours.
Telling him over and over to admit it, but Freddie didn’t know what he was being accused of.
He just wanted this to end, he no longer cared how.
Bill could kill him, he wouldn’t fight.
He had tried to fight. He had argued, and shouted and screamed.
He had been driven by fear, and rage, and survival.
He didn’t want Bill anymore, why couldn’t he get some pride, and that through his thick head.
He had screamed at him to get out of his house.
He had screamed until he couldn’t breathe, and he thought he would die.
Bill had thought Freddie would die too. He had been scared for him, Freddie could tell.
He kept screaming at him to breathe, and to stop being stupid.
Bill had hit his back until he thought his ribs might break, but he couldn’t start to breathe again until he had stopped crying.
He had stopped crying when Bill had started throwing things at him.
He supposed it was the shock that had snapped him out of it.
He was exhausted now, he couldn’t cry if he wanted to.
He thought about ringing the police. He had stared at the phone, but didn’t have the strength or courage to move from the piano stool.
They wouldn’t take him seriously anyway. “Officer I’m an adult male, and I’m being shouted at.” Who would?
He couldn’t call up the stairs to his friends.
He prayed they would hear and come and get him, but he couldn’t ask for help again, he just couldn’t.
At least Bill hadn’t hurt him, not really hurt him anyway.
His hand still throbbed, and he’d seen blood, but he hadn’t dared to look.
He had to play the piano tomorrow. Worse - he had to sing - and he couldn’t even speak.
It no longer mattered.
He wouldn’t live until the morning.

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“All fucking night Fred! What the hell was that about anyway?” yelled Roger red in the face.
“We’re all performing today, and could all do with some fucking sleep. Honestly Fred it was like being back at my parents place!”

Freddie was truly sorry, for the pain he had inflicted on his friends again. He knew that Roger was sensitive to shouting in his home.

Tonight after the show, while the band were packing away their instruments, he would leave.

He didn’t know where he would go, but his failure was affecting those he loved, and he couldn’t live with himself.

They would also be better off without him.

They were a phenomenal band, destined for success.

They would find another singer easily.

“Why don’t you just get rid of him?” Brian raised his hands, as though asking the Gods.

“You’re not getting along Freddie. Just face it. It’s not as though you are actually together, you’re shagging other people, I’m guessing he is too.”

“Knock, knock” Jim said with a smile as he popped his head around the front door.

“I knocked but no one heard, and I could hear raised voices. Hope I’m not interrupting.”

Deaky closed the door behind Jim. “Come in mate, we’ll start loading the gear in a bit. Can I get you a coffee?”

Jim nodded his thanks. He felt so much better after a full night’s sleep. He was very excited for tonight’s gig.

“What’s going on in there?” Jim inquired. “Pre-show jitters?”

“Ahhh!” Deaky sighed deeply. “Bill was round here last night, yelling and screaming at Freddie literally for hours! We were all upstairs wide awake, but didn’t come down coz we didn’t want to interfere in a domestic. We had hoped that Fred was getting rid of him. We’re a few cups, plates and light shades down this morning mate…” Deaky looked down at Jim’s feet “…so keep your shoes on.”

“My God – is Freddie alright?” Jim felt the familiar blood rush that sent him wading into large groups of fighting men in the bar. “Why didn’t he ask Bill to leave?”

“Freddie gave as good as he got mate. Don’t you be fooled. Roger came down just after 5 am to witness Freddie uppercut Reid right in the jaw. God knows what took place before that though because there was blood everywhere. Roger saw Bill off in the end, he left a few teeth behind. Roger scares me a bit to be honest. Freddie is trained in an age old martial art, but has to be pushed beyond the end of his tether to use it. Roger becomes a wild animal in an instant if anyone hurts Freddie. I honestly don’t know what happened after Roger got hold of Bill. Unfortunately no one got any sleep, Roger is a nervous wreck – but you’ll have to ask him about that - and Freddie has lost his voice yelling. We have the show today, Freddie can’t speak at all, and we absolutely cannot afford to miss it. We owe John so much! I’m just boiling the kettle for this bad boy for Freddie now.” Deaky patted a contraption that he clutched under his arm.

Jim looked confused.
“It’s a steam machine” explained Deaky. “Fred inhales steam for a bit, and it’s supposed to help his voice, or something. It’s helped in the past if he’s had the flu.”

“Can you believe Bill actually BIT Fred?! Like some kind of rabid animal. I’m very glad Bill left before Roger noticed Fred’s hand, he’d have been up on charges this morning…he might still be yet.” Deaky paused and lowered his voice. “I love Freddie…but I just don’t get him. Nobody even likes Bill. He…” Deaky stabbed his finger towards the living room “…could have anyone.”

Deaky was preaching to the choir.

Jim was absolutely distraught.

If he had been here last night – if he had been at his usual post on the sofa - Bill would not have got to Freddie at all.

If Jim had been a witness to that, Bill would not be breathing today.

Jim swallowed hard, trying to force down the rush of emotions that were threatening to overwhelm him.

The desire to lock his princess in the tower - for his own protection.

Instead, Jim forced his thoughts onto practical matters.

“Human bites are incredibly dangerous John, has he seen the doctor?” Jim was concerned.

Deaky raised his eyebrows “What do you think?! Fred wouldn’t allow Brian to call him. Brian has cleaned and dressed it, but you might want to take a look Jim – if he’ll let you. He’s a bit prickly this morning.”

Jim took his cup of coffee into the living room, and sat quietly on the sofa.

He did not like to be around during band discussions – especially heated ones - but he had offered to help the band load their gear this morning ready for the evening’s show. He would fulfill his promise as soon as their discussion was over.

He was grateful for the Queen LP that was playing loudly.

It provided a distraction from the conversation, and from his own inner thoughts.

The boys all crowded around an unusually quiet Freddie, who was still seated at the piano.

They were angry – they had a right to be – and were all talking over each other.

They felt like it was a return to the dark days of Paul Prenter, with Freddie putting his love life ahead of the band - again.

They felt Freddie irresponsible, now that the stakes were so much higher.

They had a professional manager to whom they were accountable.
They had a promoter.

They owed a lot of money.

If the band did not succeed now, they would all be out of a job – out of a dream.

Freddie - usually so lively in these discussions - could only gesticulate.

He used hand signals to attempt to communicate, for fear of putting further strain on his damaged vocal chords.

His facial expressions and body language were that of remorse, fear, and hope all mixed into one.

He had not meant for things to get so out of control with Bill.

He couldn’t bear to let them down.

He couldn’t bear to let himself down, but it was done.

It was out of his control.

The steam machine puffed out sorry wisps of air as Freddie tried to inhale them, while communicating with his band mates.

One by one they gave their final remarks – you had better sort this out, we can’t miss this gig, we can’t afford another missed night.

Freddie had given up trying to make himself understood, and sat with his head down at the piano.

Freddie knew he was wrong. He knew the band were right to blame him, but what could he do to fix it?

With his parting shot added, Deaky closed the door quietly behind him.

Jim watched Freddie from his silence on the sofa.

He felt for the boys - he agreed with them - but he couldn’t stand to see Freddie so sad.

He wanted to wrap his arms around him and tell him that it would be alright.

That he was a wonderful singer, a gifted musician, who just needed a little rest.

That someone was in his corner.

He was young.

He had made a mistake.

That he would learn from this one, and go on to become one of the world’s greatest performers.

Jim moved from the sofa.

Freddie looked up sharply as Jim approached him.

His eyes were damp with tears, but his expression was clear as he raised both hands.

“Don’t!” he croaked.
Jim understood. If he touched Freddie now, if he was to be kind to him, he would fall apart.

Freddie couldn’t afford to fall apart. He was a professional musician. He had a show to deliver. He had people relying on him – stakeholders, fans.

He was not a lovelorn boy, he was a businessman… a showman.

Jim also realised that if he was to help Freddie, he would have to change tact.

Jim plastered a beaming smile across his face, and laughing said “No, no. I just can’t let this song go by without a dance partner.”

He whipped Freddie off the stool and whirled him around the living room.

It only took a moment for Freddie’s head to fall back in silent laughter. Hair flowing out behind him.

As though Jim had dropped coins into a jukebox, the first notes of Dear Friends struck up from the record player.

Jim tipped him head to one side in animated fun, and said “Aaaahhh. Sweetie.”

The lyrics could not have been more fitting.

Jim pulled Freddie close to his chest, and they swayed to the melody.

Freddie rested his cheek on Jim’s shoulder, but the tears were gone, and he was relaxed once more.

As the last of the notes drained away, Freddie pulled back slightly, and looked up at Jim.

Their eyes locked together. Neither moved.

Jim sensed a change in Freddie, it was almost tangible.

His brown eyes starred softly into Jim’s soul. Searching for what, Jim did not know.

Jim raised a hand to Freddie’s face.

He traced a thumb over Freddie’s cheekbone, barely touching.

He placed his hand under Freddie’s chin, and softly traced his thumb over his lips.

As though pulled in by the low hum of a magnet, Jim softly pressed his lips to Freddie’s.

Freddie kissed him back, moving slowly at first.

Jim nipped softly at Freddie’s bottom lip, asking for permission. Freddie responded, allowing Jim to explore.

In seconds the heat was rising. Freddie now meeting Jim’s tongue with his own, deepening, exploring, falling deeper and deeper into each other. Questioning - could we? Is this? Are we?

Freddie was first to slowly pull back as though entranced. He tilted his head, raised an eyebrow, and smiled softly.

“That was nice” he whispered.

Jim laughed softly, and rested his forehead to Freddie’s. “That was very nice” he responded.
Freddie bit his bottom lip “I think I just cheated on my boyfriend with you - again.”

There was no sign of remorse.

Jim laughed softly. “Yes I think you did.”

The spell was broken when Deaky popped his head around the door and called “Fred, you’re needed.”

Deaky took in the stance of the two men in the room, said “oh” and backed out slowly.

Freddie turned to leave the room, but stopped, slowly he turned back to Jim as though something was occurring to him for the first time.

“You never let me down” he whispered, and was gone.

Jim whispered to himself “…and I never would.”

There were signs that Freddie’s voice was not quite to its usual strength and range, but only to those who knew him.

The sheer power of the presentation overwhelmed the venue – which was by no means small – but could not compete with the audiences of over a thousand that Queen had more recently been playing to.

They had learnt better ways of doing things.

How to make the lighting more effective. The amplification of sound so much better targeted to emphasise each instrument in turn. The Deaky amp cutting the effort required in half.

The locals, who had seen Queen go from playing student nights to key weekends, and larger venues couldn’t believe their luck.

Queen never treated the Market Tavern as a secondary venue. These gigs were to keep them playing, get them noticed – a live rehearsal really – but with every appearance Queen gave absolutely everything they had.

They may as well have been playing Wembley.

Those that knew him, could see the frustration on Freddie’s face when his voice cracked, or he reached for a note that was not there at all.

Jim thought it sounded sexy.

Whatever else happened in his life, Jim would look back on this period and know that he had witnessed the birth of one of the world’s greatest live acts.
The bar was calming a little, so Jim made his way into the audience to collect some much needed glasses.

He recognised John Reid, standing in front of the stage, hands on his hips, contemplating his investment.

John was growing on Jim.

Jim hadn’t been sure about him the first time they had met.

He thought John was just another music industry power, leaning on the young and hopeful for sexual favours, as though a beautiful voice and musical genius wasn’t enough.

Jim had been impressed when John had taken the boys under his wing, and cut through much of the confusing industry hype, so they could get on with the business of making music.

He had also been impressed when John had made it known he was gay. Ever the pragmatist, John knew the negative effect that could have in business, as did Jim.

Not that it was really Jim’s business, but he was gaining respect for the man.

Out of the corner of his eye, Jim saw Bill Reid enter the bar, and he felt the familiar adrenaline rush through his veins.

Bill was accompanied by a younger man. Slighter. Perhaps a little older than Freddie.

The couple stopped in front of the stage, and put their drinks on a high table, making it impossible for the band not to notice them. Bill made a deliberate show of flirting with the younger man.

Jim contemplated asking them to leave.

He was in charge of the bar this evening, he didn’t have to give a reason for evicting someone.

With any luck Bill would become aggressive towards him, then he could have him arrested, and try to gently encourage Freddie to press charges.

As Jim pushed passed a couple to make his way over, the band struck up Stone Cold Crazy.

Jim had never heard it performed before, and he stopped in his tracks. Roger counted them in, and with a roar from Brian’s guitar everyone came in together at break neck speed.

It was a tight, tight performance.

It seemed that Jim wasn’t the only one to be surprised by the performance. Bill made his way right to the front, to where Freddie was standing on the stage.

There was no way Freddie hadn’t seen him.

Jim looked from Freddie to Roger, and back again.

Not a flicker of recognition, or distraction.
They were consummate professionals.

Jim could not have been prouder.

He had no need to remove Bill from the premises, Freddie had just ostracised him right there.

Jim made his way back over to John Reid, as Freddie took his place at the piano.

The atmosphere changed with the tempo, and suddenly as though last night hadn’t happened, Freddie’s voice was ringing out crystal clear.

“It’s so easy, but I can’t do it. So risky – but I gotta chance it.”

John acknowledged Jim with a raise of his eyebrows, and his glass.

Jim was transfixed, but Freddie was somewhere else.

“He transcends somehow doesn’t he?” Jim said to John with a smile. “That’s not Freddie up there on the stage, it’s like he has left his body, and something else has taken over.”

John gesticulated to the lights with his eyes. “Venue’s too small” he quipped, missing Jim’s point.

John chuckled. “Freddie looks like a panther trying to curl up in a cat basket.”

Jim suddenly felt a charge in the atmosphere.

He turned from John to see Freddie’s eyes were drilling straight into him. “Forgive me when I ask you where do I belong. I can see what you want me to be, but I’m no fool. It’s in the lap of the Gods.”

With a snap he was gone, and took centre stage.

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“That’ll be 15 pence mate” Jim handed the pint over the bar.

He turned to the next customer, and caught sight of Freddie out of the corner of his eye. It seemed such an unusual place for him to be. Shouldn’t he be with the band celebrating back stage?

He was still wearing his black slinky stage costume, but he had thrown his denim jacket over the top.

He was carrying a back pack, which looked rather too large for him.

His eyes were to the ground, and he made himself look smaller than ever.

Jim couldn’t believe that Freddie was somehow managing to sneak through the crowds who had been baying for him moments before, completely unnoticed.

Jim couldn’t explain why, but his senses were awakened.

“Are you serving mate?” Jim’s attention was brought back into the room by a couple standing before him. The man was holding out a pound note.
“Sorry sir, what can I get you?” Jim turned his attention to the task in hand, but never quite took his eyes off Freddie.

Bill Reid stepped into Freddie’s path, blocking his access to the door.

He had been so close.

“I told you Freddie, you cannot escape me. What makes you think you could just run out? Did you not think I would meet you after the show? Take you home?” Bill sneered.

Freddie was exhausted, and elated, and everything in between.

He could still hear the roar of the crowd, he could still see the adoration in Jim’s eyes, he could still hear the disappointment in Roger’s voice.

Freddie flung his arms into the air. “Bill, just fuck off!” he screamed in frustration, balling his fists and stamping his feet.

The pub lights were switched up one by one, highlighting the multi coloured bruising on Bill’s face inflicted by himself and Roger the night before.

He looked like something from a nightmare.

Freddie wasn’t sure why, but he felt the giggles rising up from within him.

It was deeply ironic.

Freddie had ached for weeks.

He had borne the painful results of Bill’s aggression for weeks.

He had nursed his own rainbow bruising for weeks, but here was Bill looking like the wounded victim.

Freddie didn’t mean to, but clutching his stomach, he doubled up and howled with laughter.

Jim could see that Bill was getting redder and redder in the face.

He loomed over Freddie, jabbing his finger into his chest, pushing Freddie’s whole body with just the force of his finger.

Freddie was trying to back away.

Jim looked down at the pint he was pulling, willing it to go faster.
Freddie turned to walk away from Bill when he grabbed his shoulder, swinging Freddie back to face him.

In one hard punch Bill’s fist connected with Freddie’s face, knocking him clean off his feet onto the ground.

Jim dropped his pint onto the bar floor, beer and glass splattering in every direction.

Jim was running, leaving his very confused customers at the bar.

Freddie locked eyes with Jim when he saw him approaching, but Freddie was faster.

Like a wounded animal he was on his feet and running towards the bathroom, clutching his cheek.

He slammed the cubicle door inches from Jim’s face, and locked it behind him.
Encounters: The Beginning

Chapter Summary

Jim has had enough…what is he going to do about it?

Chapter Notes

😊 😊 😊 😊 Ooooh happy days!

Jim burst through the cubicle door like a man possessed.
The door flopped helplessly against the wall, hanging by one hinge.
Freddie was crumpled beside the toilet bowl sobbing like a broken child.
The impact of the vision was like a fist squeezing Jim’s heart, knocking the air out of him.
He doubled over, struggling for breath, hands to his knees, but the adrenaline that had propelled him
this far raged violently inside, and wasn’t ready to let him go yet.
“What the fuck Freddie?” Jim bellowed, sounding terrifying even to himself.
He no longer cared how much of himself he revealed.
He couldn’t stand back and watch a person so beautiful and so talented self-destruct any longer.
“What the fuck is wrong with you? You are so special to me. I have wanted you…. craved for you
for months, and you flit from one dip ship to another. Drugged, strangled, used as a prostitute, and
now beaten. What is the attraction to these animals, you tell me right now because I am losing my
fucking mind.”
Although shaking violently and gasping for breath, Freddie raised his head and met Jim’s stare head
on.
Challenging him, chin up, eyes narrowed.
Jim was impressed, Freddie was so brave.
There were signs of a bruise already forming on his beautiful cheekbone, and into his eye socket.
“I’m a special fuck!” Freddie spat. “You say you want me, but why does somebody like you want to
be with me? Why are you so different? Love hurts, you live with it. I was ruined long before you
ever slapped eyes on me, I don’t think you can fix me now?!”
Jim was dumb struck with the vitriol that was coming from Freddie.
Gorgeous, funny, affectionate Freddie.
Ruined…what did he mean?

Quickly Jim concluded he didn’t give a fuck.

There was nothing in this world that would stop him from loving Freddie anyway.

Jim’s voice shook with emotion. “Jesus….fuck…I would cherish you, you idiot! My god there’s nothing I won’t do for you, I don’t give a shit where you’ve been. I don’t even need to fucking know about it.”

Jim thought he might cry himself.

Why would anyone who sparkled with such joy be so resistant to love, and take violence as a preference.

Roger ran into the toilets, closely followed by Brian.

Roger pushed past Jim into the cubicle, dropping to his knees, he pulled his sobbing friend into his arms.

Pointing towards Jim, eyes narrowed, hissing “What the fuck have you done?”

“NOTHING!!!!” Jim could be heard from Mars.

“It was that shit – Reid – go and knock the crap out of him, do something to actually protect your mate for a change. You were with him the night Connors got his hands on him too weren’t you?!”

Everyone turned to look at Jim.

The atmosphere turned to ice.

He had gone too far.

Brian patted Jim’s back, head bowed, he could feel Jim’s pain radiating off him.

Roger also dropped his head, he knew Jim was right, but he couldn’t control that thing between his own legs any more than Freddie could.

Looking at the defeated bunch in front of him, and hearing Freddie’s pitiful snifflers knocked the remaining anger out of Jim.

He collapsed to his knees, wiping his hands over his face in exhaustion.

Seconds past in silence.

Finally Jim raised his head. “Thank you Roger. I’m so glad that Freddie has you as a friend. You console him, which is what I should be doing, instead I’m scolding you like an angry father. That’s not my right. Please forgive me.”

Roger rubbed Freddie’s back and smiled. “You’ll be alright mate won’t you? We’ve got through worse. Besides…..” Roger looked at each person in turn “…he’s got a team now.”

Everyone nodded.

“You are a part of that team Jim, and for what it’s worth I am sorry. I could be a better friend sometimes.”
Freddie shook his head, and squeezed Roger’s hand.

Defeated, Freddie looked up at Jim with enormous dark eyes from beneath his fringe.

“You really want me in your life….like …as your ….boyfriend?” stammered Freddie, totally astonished.

Brian thrust his hands into the air, then over his eyes “Hallelfuckingluyah.”

Everyone laughed.

At that moment Deaky burst into the bathroom, red faced and out of breath. “What did I miss?”

“Only an eclipse mate” said Brian.

“Huh?” Deaky frowned in confusion.

Jim realised his time had finally come.

It was now, or it was never… and he would have to really put himself out there. Faint heart and all that...

“Want you?!” he asked incredulously. “Sweetheart I have turned into an idiot for you!”

Brian nodded in agreement.

“From the moment I saw you on that podium I’ve never talked so much shit. I’ve got into fist fights. I’ve drunk more whisky than I’ve ever served – I can’t stand the bloody stuff! ..and if I may speak for MY cock… I don’t own a pair of jeans slack enough to contain me.”

John rolled his eyes. “Cocks again!”

Freddie giggled.

It was a welcome, encouraging sound, so Jim thought he would dig himself in a little deeper.

“I’ve even wanked myself off in the most disgusting toilet cubicles. I’m 26 years old! ”

There were groans all round.

Jim continued “I really don’t understand what you get from fucking in these places…."

Freddie’s tears had stemmed, and he was laughing openly now.

“I can vouch for all that.” Brian tailed off blushing. “Not the wanking part… that I have no use for knowing.” His curls rustled as he violently shook his head, and walked out of the cubicle.

Jim reached out his hands towards Freddie.

“Come on darling please, can you give a love stricken idiot a chance?”

Jim counted the seconds...

Freddie considered it for a moment, shyly looking into Jim’s eyes as though trying to read him, without letting Jim see into his own heart.

Freddie tentatively held out his hands to Jim.
Relieved Jim chuckled “You’re going to have to come out of that space sweetheart, I can’t squeeze in there.”

Freddie shuffled out from beside the toilet, and felt himself being pulled into Jim’s arms, then lifted.

Jim cradled Freddie as tightly as he could to his body, and made his way out of the bathroom, followed by the boys making a series of ahhhh sounds.

“Well” said Jim smiling “By way of an excuse that was a very hard punch, he might be dizzy.”

Freddie wrapped his arms around Jim’s neck, and buried his face into the warmth he found there.

For the first time in his life he didn’t just feel aroused by muscled shoulders and large hands, he felt safe.

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“Brian, have you got any frozen peas….”

Jim paused for a moment, frowning as he examined Freddie’s face, lifting the odd lock of hair that was in the way. “…and…baby wipes?”

Jim couldn’t work out what was bruising, and what was stage make up.

Brian stood beside Jim frowning. “I might have frozen peas….but why would I have baby wipes?”

Freddie giggled.

He reached out a hand and pulled his heavy back pack towards him.

“There’s some make up remover in here.” Freddie unzipped the pack and pulled out his blanket, putting it on the sofa, before delving further into the bag.

Jim looked at the blanket, then at Freddie. He had been planning to run. Freddie clocked Jim’s expression, but neither spoke.

After a few moments of rummaging in his pack, Freddie produced some make up remover and cotton wool. He handed them to Jim.

“Oh, I’m doing this am I?” Jim said with a smile.

He poured too much make up remover onto the cotton wool, and started to dab gently at Freddie’s face.

“I don’t even know if I’m doing this right” Jim said with a baffled expression, changing angles to get a better look at his handiwork.

Freddie giggled.

Eventually clean skin started to appear, and Jim pushed Freddie’s hair back, pleased with his efforts.

“There he is!” Jim said affectionately.
Brian handed Jim a cold heavy tea towel which was starting to drip as the ice melted. “Carrots” he said with a smirk.

Jim put the home made ice pack in Freddie’s hand, and lifted his hand up to his cheekbone.

Freddie squealed when the cold water dripped onto his lap.

“Right, keep it there for a while. It’s not very pleasant, but it will slow the swelling, and you won’t look so tough tomorrow.”

Freddie giggled.

Roger flopped down into the chair, and draped his legs over the arm.

“I feel….weird” he announced. “Normally I just want to get wasted after a show, but I feel sort of displaced somehow – like it never happened.”

Brian looked at Roger from head to toe, and wrinkled his nose.

“It happened Rog, and you still need to shower.”

Reluctantly Roger got up from the chair with a big yawn. “God, I’m fucked.”

Deaky, still wearing his leather jacket and shoes, wandered into the living room and put the TV on.

“Are you stopping Deaks?” inquired Brian.

“Yeah. I think I’ll just zone out for a bit if that’s alright?” He sat on the floor, with his back to the sofa. “I think we had a good show,” he said nodding to himself.

Moments later he was back on his feet, and wandering into the kitchen looking for beer.

Jim slipped off his shoes, and laid his jacket on the back of the sofa.

He sat down beside Freddie, who was perched on the edge, not really sure what to do with himself while holding the bag of frozen carrots.

Jim flicked his feet up, and stretched out behind Freddie on the sofa.

“I think I’ll go get a shower after Rog” Freddie said after a couple of quiet minutes.

Jim gripped Freddie’s upper arms and pulled him down to lie on top of him, shrieking as the frozen carrots landed on his chest.

He shook out Freddie’s blanket, and wrapped it around them both. “No, you have more urgent needs” he said wrapping his arms tightly around him.

Jim listened to the sound of their breathing. To the ticking of the clock.

He stroked rhythmic circles on Freddie’s back with the palm of his hand, but he didn’t know what to say.

No one tells you what you should feel, how you should act, and what you should say when your dream comes true.
Should he have the perfect line?

The perfect moves?

Thinking back to the adrenaline fuelled moment that he had kicked the toilet door down, Jim surmised it could be deemed romantic – a tale to tell.

Jim felt like roles had been reversed.

Bold, cheeky, flirtatious Freddie was being the quiet one, and he - Mr Zero personality - felt he should take the lead.

He didn’t have the kind of bubbly persona that people were drawn to.

He was nothing like Freddie.

He squeezed Freddie tighter and said “I meant every word I said you know. Everything is going to be fine now.”

How was Jim to know he had said exactly the right thing?

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Brian folded himself into the chair, taking a sip from the neck of his bottle.

It wasn’t often he wore his dressing gown downstairs, but he was in one of those moods.

The gig had gone well, and he wasn’t manager anymore.

He flicked his feet up onto the pouffe, and settled back to watch some TV.

Deaky reappeared, also with a beer. “Do you guys want a beer?” he asked Freddie and Jim.

Jim stroked back Freddie’s hair and asked him “Do you want a beer sweetheart?”

Freddie shook his head. “Tea please.”

“Two teas please Deaky….if you don’t mind?”

Roger appeared at the living room door. “Urgh…” he said looking away with a grin “…you’re going to be one of those sickly sweet couples aren’t you?”

“No” said Freddie, suddenly coming to life with a mischievous grin. “We’re going to be all hot and steamy.”

Freddie wound his fingers into Jim’s hair, tugging softly, searching for a kiss.

Jim took Freddie by surprise with a heated kiss, leaving him breathless and more than a little aroused. Freddie kissed back, pushing his hips down hard against Jim’s, whimpering at the answering hardness in his jeans.

“Get a room!” said Deaky.
“Not my room” shrieked Roger.

Freddie and Jim laughed, while staring deeply into each other’s eyes.

Freddie laid his head back down on Jim’s chest, but his hand was wandering down Jim’s stomach under the cover of his blanket. He squeezed firmly at the bulge in Jim’s jeans causing Jim to groan louder than he intended.

“Oh my God! I’m changing my mind about this relationship” Brian shrieked with a laugh.

Suddenly, there was a loud knock at the door, followed quickly by another on the window.

A voice called “Freddie, it’s Winnie, are you in there? I thought we were meeting? You’ve let me down again!”

Winnie did not sound happy.

Freddie froze, and stared at Jim.

“Did you know Winnie was coming round tonight?” Jim asked cagily.

“I said I would meet him after the gig” Freddie said warily, looking everywhere but at Jim. “I didn’t tell him….can we just not answer the door.”

Freddie having decided that was the best course of action, snuggling back up with Jim.

Jim shook him gently. “Come on sweetheart, you need to tell him.”

Freddie buried his face in Jim’s chest and mumbled “He’ll be upset though.”

“He’ll be very upset sweetheart, you’re a lot to lose, but you know it’s the right thing to do don’t you? You need to tell him to his face” Jim insisted gently.

A couple of minutes later, Winnie knocked more insistently.

“Come on Freddie” insisted Jim, a little more firmly, giving his a shake. “Don’t be silly. He’s not going to hurt you while I’m here.”

Freddie begrudgingly got up from his warm place. Pouting he turned to Jim “You’re going to be a tough lover aren’t you?!”

Everybody laughed at the irony.

“If you’re not back inside in ten minutes, I’ll come out. Stay where I can see you from the door” Jim instructed him.

“Yes Dad” Freddie called over his shoulder.

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Nine and a half minutes later, the boys heard the front door closing.

Freddie looked like he had been sucking on something very bitter.
“Did he cry?” asked Roger sarcastically.

“He was upset” said Freddie quietly, rubbing his arms briskly “I feel all cringy.”

“Fred, the man tied you to a bed post and left you there!” shrieked Roger.

Brian and Deaky glared at him. No one wanted reminding of that episode.

Roger started to chuckle, which bubbled over into laughter. “You know, now that you’re OK, and I’m over the shock, you must admit - seizure aside - that was pretty funny? I mean when we’re rock stars that will be THE tale to tell, the time Freddie was left tied to a bedpost. Very rock and roll.”

It was slow to start, but laughter did spread around the room, except for Freddie himself, he was still cringing.

“I hate upsetting people” he whined.

Jim linked his finger with Freddie’s pulling him back towards him. “Do you want to go and have a shower?”

“In a minute” he said perking up, as it dawned on him that he’d actually managed to successfully end a relationship.

Freddie straddled Jim’s lap, and kissed him passionately.

Jim shuddered and wound his fingers into Freddie’s hair, pulling him closer. “You’re a hot little thing” he gasped between kisses, then their lips were together again.

Jim wrapped his hands around Freddie’s buttocks and pulled him closer to his body. Freddie whimpered when he felt how aroused Jim was for him.

“My God! We’re never going to have a peaceful night in front of the TV again!” yelled Deaky. “Just get into each other, and be done with it!”

“Not in my room!” yelled Roger.

Suddenly there was an almighty crash at the front door.

The boys looked at each other horrified. It sounded as though the front door has been torn off.

A drunken voice wailed “Freddie, you can’t get rid of me that easily.”

Bill Reid.

“I’ll take this one” said Jim. “Brian would you ring the police please?” he asked calmly.

Jim pushed Freddie carefully off his knee, and wrapped his blanket tightly around him. Freddie drew his feet up under the blanket, and Jim dropped a kiss on his nose when he saw he was so anxious.

“Don’t worry” he said walking purposefully towards the door, and closing it tight behind him.

Freddie heard Jim open the front door, and was instantly on his feet.

“What if Bill hurts him?” Freddie ran towards the door.

Roger and Brian jumped up to grab him.
“You’ve got a decent boyfriend now Fred, let him look after you” soothed Roger.

“But what if Jim starts a fight, and gets hurt?” Freddie was wrestling to get away.

“Jim’s not going to start a fight Freddie” said Brian.

“He might finish one” snapped Roger under his breath.

Brian rolled his eyes “Shut up Roger!”

Brian turned back to Freddie. “Jim does this for a job remember. He deals with angry people just like Bill every day. He knows how to handle them. Jim will just talk to him I bet, he won’t even get angry.”

“There’s no talking to Bill, I’ve tried and tried” said Freddie sadly.

“Think of it like when we ask you to sing a new song that one of us has written.” Brian started, waving his hand around the room to encompass the band. “You ask us how we want you to sing it, and you get it wrong, and we argue, and whoever wrote it will eventually prefer someone else’s idea, and you sing it just perfect in the end, because you are a professional? Jim will try every different way to communicate with Bill until he gets through to him” reasoned Brian.

“Listen.” Brian held up his finger, and everyone fell silent. “Can’t hear any shouting can you?”

“Maybe Jim missed him, and Bill is hiding somewhere to get us later” said Freddie fearfully.

“Freddie, you’re catastrophasising. Now come and sit back down, and wait for Jim” Brian said firmly.

Freddie crawled back under his blanket, and the boys all crammed onto the sofa.

There was flash of light across the ceiling, to announce the silent approach of the police car.

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What felt like hours later, the front door opened causing Freddie to jump.

Jim stepped calmly back into the room, followed by an enormous police officer in a custodian hat that nearly reached the ceiling.

“Where’s Bill?” asked Freddie shakily.

“He’s in the car Freddie, he’s been arrested. He’s going quietly, OK?” said Jim calmly.

“Everyone, this is Inspector Carter. Brian, Roger, John, and this is Freddie.”

Freddie looked like a rabbit caught in headlights.

“The officer just wants to see your eye Freddie, nothing more at this stage.”

The Inspector stepped into the light to get a better look.

To everyone’s astonishment, Freddie unwrapped the bandage on his hand to reveal the bite mark on
that was so severe, there were clearly defined teeth marks.

Next Freddie rolled down the sleeves of his cat suit – to which the inspector raised an eyebrow - and showed him the pale yellow bruising on his ribs.

Horrified the boys looked from one to the other. Questions on their lips. How have we not noticed this? How have we let this happen to our friend? Why didn’t he tell anyone?

Freddie picked up his jacket, and produced a card out of the pocket. He gave it to the Inspector. “This is John Reid’s contact details. He’s our manager. He saw me at my worse” said Freddie quietly.

Brian raised his eye brows “Did he know about this?”

Freddie shook his head.

“You know son, if you want to press charges, we can go down to the station tonight and get things rolling?” said the inspector.

Freddie shook his head, and sat back down wrapping his blanket around himself.

“Leave it for tonight officer” Jim spoke on Freddie’s behalf. “We’ll have a talk about it, and come back to you in a day or two.”

Everybody spoke at once when the policeman left the room.

Everybody that is – except Freddie – who following his uncharacteristic show of candour, did not want to talk about it anymore.

Freddie was sitting on the sofa wrapped in his blanket when Jim returned from showing the policeman out.

He was still a little pale and jumpy. It had been an enormous few days.

Jim knelt in front of the sofa and took Freddie’s hand. He looked a little shaken himself.

“Are you OK?” he asked concerned.

“Where is Bill?” Freddie inquired.

“He’s gone sweetheart. In hand cuffs. I think I got through to him. I told him we had gone straight from the Market Tavern to the police station, and filled out a report, and that a restraining order was being processed. I suggested he go quietly, it would be better for him in the long run. He seemed to take it on board. In his own warped way sweetheart, I think he thought he was showing his love for you.”

Freddie looked down as his nails. “It’s all my fault. It was only meant to be a one night stand, I wanted to stop feeling so shit over Paul.”

“No!” said Jim firmly. “You can’t blame yourself for this Freddie…”

Brian cut across him “You said yourself you have told him over and over that you didn’t want to be
“…never an excuse for violence” finished Jim.

“I knew he was a piece of shit the minute I laid eyes on him…” said Roger.

Brian shot him a look.

Freddie squeezed Roger’s hand “I’m sorry Rogee, you are the best friend anyone could have. It’s all my fault….”

Jim clapped his hands together. “Enough of this self-blame” he squeezed Freddie’s hand “…we’ll have a talk about that later. But first….come on get your stuff together, I want to take you home and spoil you.” Jim wiggled his eyebrows in humour.

“Urgh” said Roger rolling his eyes. “At least it’s not in my room.”

“FUCK!!” Jim shouted dropping his head into his hands. Freddie jumped, and Jim sat down beside him on the sofa, pulling Freddie into his arms.

“In all the drama I’d forgotten that my Mother is staying at mine tonight.”

Roger clapped his hands and doubled over laughing. Pointing at Freddie he laughed “He’s really loud, you’re gonna have to gag him!”

“Never mind” Jim whispered to Freddie. “Still, come home with me” Jim nuzzled Freddie’s hair. “Mum knows I’m into boys, it’ll do her no harm to meet you. She’ll love you.”

Freddie paled, but couldn’t find the words.

“Is our door broken?” he asked deflecting everyone’s attention from Jim’s question.

Everybody laughed. “He’d rather take his chances with a broken front door, than your mother mate” said Brian.

Jim chuckled. “The door is damaged, but the lock is holding.”

“We should get onto John Reid in the morning about that door” said Brian.

Deaky raised his eyebrows. “Does he have a side line as a glazier?”

“All bills through him” sang Brian.

“Aaah” the penny dropped.

Jim narrowed his eyes, examining Freddie’s face. “You’re tired, and you want to go to bed, and you don’t know how to tell me that you don’t want to come to mine tonight.” It was more of an assessment than a question.

“It has been a huge few days mate” said Roger, also peering into Freddie’s face, like he was a specimen in a petri dish.

Jim hugged Freddie tightly. “Do you want to stay here tonight, and I’ll come get you in the morning?”

Freddie nodded.
Jim moved to stand, but Freddie grabbed him “You will come back tomorrow won’t you?” he asked in a small voice trying not to let the others hear.

“Come here” Jim dragged Freddie up by the hand, who nearly tripped over his blanket which had fallen around his feet.

Jim led Freddie to the front door. “Come have a look at this door” he said loudly.

When they got out front, and found themselves alone. Jim pulled Freddie into a hug.

“I just wanted to get you all to myself for a minute.” Jim searched for Freddie’s lips in a soft kiss. “All this….” He softly brushed his knuckles against Freddie’s bruised cheekbone “…is over. This will never happen to you again.” They kissed. “…and of course I’m coming back tomorrow. Maybe one day you will understand just how special you are, but for now I’ll just tell you that you are my dream come true Freddie Mercury. Now, in you go, back to your friends, and I’ll come get you tomorrow.” Jim swatted Freddie’s arse “…and THAT is a promise.”

Freddie grinned “Mmmmm promises you had better keep Mr Hutton.”

Jim escorted Freddie back into the house, and popping his head around the door he called to the lads “See you tomorrow.”

Jim tugged the warped door firmly behind him.

As he made his way down the path he shot a fist in the air “Yeah” he shouted.

What he didn’t realise is that Freddie was watching him from the living room window.
Encounters: Inside

Chapter Summary

Jim faces moments of insecurity, and feels unprepared after the unexpected events of the previous day, but Freddie makes his feelings perfectly clear. Jim’s Mum reveals something about her son.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is basically smut lovies, with a little family stuff thrown in….sorry (not sorry!) You have been warned 😊

It was a hazy summer’s morning in Covent Garden.

It was going to be a scorcher.

Jim couldn’t wait to see Freddie.

Jim had invited Freddie to join him that morning, after he had a final coffee with his Mum before she headed home to Ireland.

Freddie had mentioned how much he liked Covent Garden, maybe he would like to see a show, or go to a gallery.

Jim had hardly slept the previous night, in anticipation of what would come next.

He had worked so hard to get Freddie’s attention, to earn his trust, and now that he had it Jim was terrified.

He had tossed and turned with every new thought.

Did Freddie really want him?

Jim had made it known how he felt, but how did Freddie feel?

He was renowned for keeping his feelings buttoned up inside.

Had Freddie reached out for the closest person who could help him in a vulnerable moment?

Would Jim be out and about today, and see Freddie with another man?

Had Freddie understood what Jim wanted from this? Brian had said Freddie didn’t have committed relationships.

He couldn’t let things slide, he had to woo Freddie and soon.

Jim’s Mum sipped her coffee, and took in the atmosphere of Covent Garden.
Jim liked to bring his Mum here when she visited. It was a far cry from Carlow, and it gave her a little excitement - much how Jim had felt when he first arrived in London.

Jim loved his Mum dearly, and they had always been close.

She had been heartbroken when he had moved to London, but she also understood why.

It was the men in the family that could never fully understand what Jim was.

To her, Jim would always be first and foremost her loving son.

Jim held up a hand to shield his eyes from the sun.

To his surprise, he could see Freddie up ahead. He was early.

Freddie was talking animatedly with another boy.

It didn’t trouble him though – Jim never forgot a face – and he recognised the boy from the night at Copacabana all those weeks ago. This was the boy who had led Freddie away from himself and Jim Connors when their tempers had flared.

Jim would like to get to know Freddie’s friends from college a little better. It was nice that he had friends outside of the music industry – his own age – friends who did not try to take advance of his talent, beauty, or generous nature.

Freddie embraced the boy, and they went their separate ways.

Aside from the very obvious bruise covering his cheekbone and eye socket, Freddie looked like any other student today. Jeans, trainers, face washed clean of makeup, hair soft and fluffy around his shoulders.

As he drew closer, Jim could see that Freddie was covered in paint, and if he ever wanted to pull off a bad boy persona – today was that day.

The thing that separated Freddie from every other student though was his beautiful sparkly eyes.

What a difference a good night’s sleep could make.

Jim had to wonder when the last time was that Freddie had spent a fun relaxed night in his room with Roger, or when he had last slept the night through not frightened by his abusive partner.

How had Jim missed it?!

Freddie noticed Jim, and a slow smile spread from ear to ear, and all of Jim’s fears faded away.

Freddie was pleased to see him.

Freddie hesitated a little as he walked up behind Jim’s mother, not sure if to make his presence known.

Jim held his hand up to shield his eyes from the sun, and gave Freddie a warm smile.

“Come on then” Jim said encouragingly, standing to pull out a chair for Freddie beside him. “Don’t be shy.”

Freddie pulled Jim into a warm hug, and soft lips found his cheek.
Freddie sat down, and giggled as Jim pulled his chair closer.

“Ma, this is my Freddie, Freddie this is my Mum.”

Mrs Hutton raised her eyebrows. “Your Freddie hey?”

Freddie shook her hand. “I’m very pleased to meet you Mrs Hutton” he said, with more confidence than Jim expected.

“Would you like a coffee, Freddie?” asked Mrs Hutton summoning the waitress.

“Freddie likes tea Ma” said Jim.

“Tea would be lovely please, Mrs Hutton” said Freddie with a bright smile.

Jim ruffled Freddie’s hair. “Have you been paint balling?” he asked with a chuckle.

Freddie giggled. “I’ve been to an art class” he announced proudly.

“Are you at college Freddie?” asked Mrs Hutton, not taking her eyes from Jim’s face.

“Not anymore” said Freddie “I recently graduated, but I still like to attend art classes sometimes. I also model from time to time… still life….”

Freddie pretended to shuffle his chair, as he did, he whispered in Jim’s ear “…naked.”

Jim’s eyes widened, and he gasped for air. He turned to face Freddie, who sat back primly in his chair, wide eyed like butter wouldn’t melt.

Jim felt the blood rush to his cock.

“Oh yes, I can just see that, with those cheekbones.” Mrs Hutton smiled.

She turned to Jim. “James, is this boy legal?”

Jim was between a rock and a very hard place.

“Yes Ma” he wailed a little high pitched. “I hoped you knew me better than that.”

“No offence Freddie, but you have the figure of a ballerina” laughed Mrs Hutton.

Freddie giggled “None taken.”

“Ma! Half of Freddie’s face is bruised, there is a hole in the hand you just shook, and you go with ‘isn’t he tiny?’” Jim said incredulously.

“Well, I was trying not to be rude” Mrs Hutton wailed.

Everyone laughed at the obvious irony.

“Am I allowed to ask what did happen to your face Freddie?” said Mrs Hutton, suddenly serious.

Jim squeezed Freddie’s hand. “Maybe not Ma, hey.”

“No, it’s OK” Freddie said softly, looking at their joined hands.

“I was assaulted yesterday” Freddie said sadly.
“No! Surely not. Was it a homophobic attack?” Mrs Hutton asked sadly.

Freddie shook his head, suddenly more interested in his tea cup.

Horrified, Mrs Hutton rounded on Jim. “James, you need to start taking better care of this boy!”

Freddie stroked his hand up Jim’s thigh - dangerously close. “Yeah Jim, when are you gonna start taking care of me?” Freddie chimed under his breath, eyes playful, intention clear.

Jim squeezed Freddie’s hand, halting it’s journey.

“Did James tell you he was qualifying to be a police officer back in Ireland?” said Mrs Hutton proudly.

Freddie stared at Jim “No!” he said open mouthed.

“Mum! Don’t get started on that again” said Jim sadly.

“His Father and I really hoped he would take it up again once he got settled here, or rather came home. I have to say, I’m rather surprised you haven’t.”

“You know how things were for me in the force Ma. They aren’t ready for gay people. One day, the force will accept it, but now is not that time, and I made the right decision for me” said Jim firmly, obviously having had that particular conversation a thousand times before.

“I know, I know James, and I’m sorry to bring it up. Your Father and I just want to see you happy alright?” She squeezed Jim’s hand.

Jim clasped Freddie’s hand with his spare one. “I am happy Ma.”

“I still find it odd to see two men holding hands” said Mrs Hutton, not unkindly.

Freddie snatched his and Jim’s linked hands back under the table.

“Oh, I’m sorry Freddie darling. It’s my generation I suppose. No offence to you at all – either of you.”

Freddie took his advantage of having his hand under the table, working it slowly up Jim’s inner thigh.

Jim bit his lip.

Mrs Hutton looked at her watch.

“Well, it’s time I must be off. The plane won’t wait for me” she said with a smile.

“Freddie, you really must visit us in Ireland” continued Mrs Hutton, completely oblivious to her son’s discomfort. “You’d be very welcome. We all still miss James so much. His Father can be a little….well I’m sure you know….but it’s high time he got over that.”

Mrs Hutton leant down to Jim to give him a hug. Jim wasn’t in the position to stand, so he wrapped his arms around his Mum’s neck giving her a kiss on each cheek, soon realising that he had left himself un guarded.

“Now James, look after Freddie!”
Jim’s mouth hung open. Freddie beamed.

“What about me Mum?!” Jim whined.

Mrs Hutton smiled at Freddie “You’re a big boy James, he looks harmless this one – even with that shiner.”

Freddie squeezed Jim’s cock.

“Are you sure?” Jim croaked.

“Have a safe journey Mrs Hutton. It was really lovely to meet you” Freddie crooned sweetly, giving her a wave.

As the clatter of heels, and the suitcase wheels on cobblestones disappeared, Jim turned to Freddie, stunned.

“I want you now!” Freddie whispered.

********************************

Dizzy and shaking with laughter, Jim pushed Freddie down onto his large bed.

It was as though Freddie was finally allowing Jim to know him.

Finally Jim was inside that shell that Freddie kept tightly around himself.

Freddie teased and tested, ribbed and poked, and laughed openly around him, as though Jim was now part of an inside joke, that previously Freddie had only released part of. As though Jim hadn’t been trusted to understand all of it.

Gone were the sideways glance’s, the curiously raised eyebrow, and the sneaky looks when he thought Jim wasn’t looking.

Both completely naked in front of the other, both intentions clear, both warm but shivering, tense with sexual need.

It was clear what would happen.

Jim threw the lube bottle down on the bed.

Him and Freddie had taken their first shower together … teasing, stroking, fingering, grasping, learning about each other’s body.

What they liked, what they didn’t, and what would get the other everywhere.

Jim laid down beside Freddie, who was laid out like a king, taking up as much of the bed as his stature allowed him.

“Phwoah naked and comfortable” teased Freddie, attempting to reach both sides of the bed, and
lifting his lips to accept Jim’s kiss.

“Cheeky” smiled Jim, running a hand down Freddie’s torso making him shiver.

Finally, Jim got to touch the beautiful body that had been driving him crazy for weeks.

Jim ran a hand down Freddie’s thigh, disappearing behind his knee. He pushed Freddie’s knee up towards his stomach, and trailed the hand back down Freddie’s thigh towards his buttock.

“I want to learn how to drive this beautiful body to the point of insanity” Jim hissed, gently pushing two fingers back inside him, making Freddie gasp and raise his hips off the bed, causing his back to arch beautifully.

“I already know you like this sensation” Jim said chuckling at Freddie’s reaction.

Freddie raised an eyebrow questioning.

“Oh honey, you told me that the first night we all had drinks at your house. I was taking note!” Jim chuckled, locating the perfect spot and massaging gently.

Freddie’s laughter broke into a whine, as he covered his flushed face with his arm.

Jim slowly added another finger, and continued to massage at the spot he knew would further weaken Freddie’s grip on control.

Jim felt Freddie’s body start to pulse; to shake and shudder.

“You’re not gonna come from just that are you sweetheart?” Jim teased, loving how sensitive Freddie was.

Freddie gripped Jim’s shoulder hard, with a gasp, eyes dark with need.

“Hang in there little one.” Jim laughed scattering kisses over Freddie’s nose.

He gently withdrew his fingers, never having felt more validated.

He was somebody that make could Freddie feel this good. The wait, the tension, the build-up, it had all been worth it, and more.

Freddie started to plead softly. Jim leaned closer, trying to catch the words in his gasps.

“Please, please, please” Freddie whispered over and over.

“What do you want sweetheart? Tell me what you want” Jim teased.

Freddie covered his face completely as shyness overtook him.

Despite being on the edge of insanity, he still couldn’t tell Jim what he needed.

There was shame there after all, thought Jim.

Most gay men carried shame like an overcoat. They were exhibitionists in the clubs, introverts in the street.

Freddie could never be considered an introvert. His magnetic personality, need for company, and shyness seemed to run parallel – entities that never overlapped - but for all his exhibited sexual
behaviour, he had his sensitivities like the rest of them.

Jim wasn’t sure what motivated Freddie’s shame, but it wasn’t welcome here.

Jim pulled Freddie’s arm away from his face. “Don’t hide from me beautiful. Show me what you’re feeling.”

It occurred to Jim that with Freddie’s bar bathroom sexploits, not too many of his lovers had actually looked into his eyes while devouring him.

Jim uncapped the lube bottle, and spread a generous amount over his very aroused cock.

Weeks of torment, teasing, and wanting had come to this very moment, and although Jim wanted nothing more than to hold Freddie down and fuck him into next week, he had to make this good for him.

Something Freddie would remember, and want again tomorrow.

Settling between Freddie’s legs, Jim leant on his elbows, hands either side of Freddie’s face.

They kissed softly at first, at odds with the intensity of the moment.

Pushing his lips softly onto Freddie’s, Jim nipped gently at his bottom lip begging access. He pushed his tongue tentatively into Freddie’s mouth, it was met with his own, hungry and passionate.

Jim pushed the head of his cock into Freddie, gently, slowing, giving his body time to adjust.

It was clear to Jim how much Freddie really did genuinely enjoy sex.

The sounds coming from his lips were delicious as Jim eased all the way inside.

The way his face and neck flushed, and his body yielded almost instantaneously around him.

Jim pulled out nearly all the way, and then slowly taking his time, pushed back in prompting those gorgeous sounds from Freddie.

Jim knew he had to be in control. The gorgeous heat of Freddie’s body finally around him could drive him off the edge very quickly. Slowly, carefully.

He pushed a hand under Freddie’s hip, fingers running over where they were joined.

Jim moved slowly at first, pushing into Freddie’s prostrate causing him to moan softly.

Jim rocked carefully hitting the sensitive spot again and again, capturing kisses as the moans got louder, more urgent.

Jim tutted, teasing and tormenting as he could see the frustration building inside Freddie. He wrapped his arms under Freddie’s stopping him from touching anywhere below his waist.

“Is this the first sex you’ve had that’s not been a quickie?” Jim teased, starting to pant as the pleasure took over his own body. “I’m not roughhousing you darling, you’ll take all of it, in my time.”

It was a bold statement. Jim didn’t know how much time he actually had before he would lose control.

Freddie cried out as he became more sensitive with every thrust. The heat building in his stomach
and down his thighs.

He could feel his cock throbbing, but Jim made no attempt to relieve it for him. He had never felt this good. He didn’t know what to do.

Freddie cried out in frustration, and grabbed at Jim’s hair. “Oh temper” teased Jim his own voice becoming a whine as he thrust harder.

Freddie dug his fingers hard into Jim’s back as the heat pooling in his stomach started to build with every hit.

Jim kissed up his neck, nuzzling at the soft skin.

“Let it go darling” Jim whispered.

The feeling in the pit of Freddie’s stomach welled with no warning, and no preamble.

He gripped Jim’s shoulders “I’m….I’m…” His orgasm struck him so suddenly, and with such intensity he shouted out, covering Jim’s stomach and chest with white heat. Back arched impossibly off the bed, head back, eyes shut tightly.

The waves washed over him again and again as he continued to shout out.

As Freddie’s body tightened deliciously, Jim crashed over the edge, thrusting uncontrollably against breath taking heat and tightness.

He couldn’t think, he couldn’t speak, that was it, that moment - exactly where he should be.

He squeezed Freddie tightly to his body, feeling every inch of him.

“Mine” Jim whispered softly.

They collapsed together, sated, satisfied, limbs heavy, both experiencing drowsiness like never before.

The warmth in Freddie’s stomach didn’t leave his body, it threatened to engulf him.

Making its way up his stomach, over his chest, his breathing became unsteady, and his throat tightened.

Hot tears pushed from his eyes and dribbled over his cheeks.

The movement of his arm to cover his eyes raised Jim’s attention.

He pushed Freddie’s hand away and kissed his cheeks softly where the tears flowed. “Don’t hide from me darling” he whispered “Show me.”

Freddie smiled, wet giggles to show Jim that he was really OK.

Jim ran a tender thumb over Freddie’s cheekbone.

“How are you feeling?” Freddie’s answer was a weak moan as another aftershock hit.

Wrapped in each other, eyes closed, they fell into a contented sleep.
Jim recovered first.

He disentangled himself from Freddie’s sleep heavy limbs.

He kissed Freddie’s cheek gently so as not to wake him.

He took a moment to look at Freddie’s face softened in satisfied slumber.

He looked impossibly young for a man who had just taken all of him, and driven him off the edge.

Jim grabbed the woollen blanket from the top of the wardrobe, and laid it over Freddie’s body. Both Freddie and the blanket would need a wash later.

Pulling on a pair of boxers he quietly left the room to go and make tea. Freddie would be thirsty when he woke up, and Jim wanted to take care of his every need.

Idly, he thought he would take Freddie shopping to get some nice china cups that he would like to drink his tea from.

Freddie was something of a tea connoisseur, and Jim wanted him to feel at home here.

Jim caught his own reflection in the hallway mirror as he carried the tea tray towards the stairs.

He too looked flushed and ridiculously happy. He’d have to do something about his hair though.

Jim pushed the door open quietly, Freddie was still sleeping.

He set the tray down, and walked over to the record player, selecting something modern, but warm and lilting before heading back to the bed to gently wake Freddie.

“Hey sleepyhead.” Jim rubbed Freddie’s cheek with his knuckles.

Inhaling deeply, and stretching dramatically, Freddie opened his eyes slowly with a wide smile.

He playfully snapped his eyes closed again, and said “Yayyy, I had hoped it wasn’t just a nice dream.”

Jim felt warm from head to toe. Remembering how much differently things had been the last time Freddie had woken in his bed.

So… we had playful Freddie this afternoon.

Jim helped Freddie to sit up, arranging the pillows behind him, and pushing some stray hair around his ear.

Jim kissed Freddie deeply, then passed him a cup of tea with a bow of his head, and a little flourish.

“How are you feeling this afternoon sir?”

Freddie giggled “I feel spectacular kind sir.”

Freddie took a sip of his hot tea, and wrinkled his nose. “Needs more sugar” he said a little shyly.
Jim liked when Freddie asked for things. It was all part of now being inside the inner circle, as though Freddie could trust Jim not to fall out with him over something so small.

Jim dropped another teaspoon of sugar into Freddie’s tea, and gave it a stir.

Jim climbed under the blanket, and pulled Freddie into his arms.

“You are lovely” he said, kissing the top of his head.

Freddie was quite for a moment, before he asked “Have you really wanted to fuck me from the first time we met?”

Jim nodded with a smile. “Yep, you were so incredibly sexy, you took my breath away.”

Freddie slapped Jim’s chest playfully. “Why didn’t you do anything about it then? I’m hardly a plaster saint!”

Jim shrugged. He didn’t quite know how to explain without scary Freddie away.

That he hadn’t just wanted to fuck him, that he wanted moments like these – wrapped around him – safe and warm, post love making.

How he had dreamt of this moment all that time ago, when he had given chase to a beautiful wild boy in the club.

That he wanted to know him - really know him.

That he wanted to have these conversations every day for the rest of his life.

“I couldn’t Freddie. There was always someone else. Multiple someone else’s…” Jim gave Freddie a teasing tickle. “What would you have done if I’d have kissed you?” Jim inquired.

Freddie tutted “Kissed you back!” he said as though Jim was stupid.

“Yes, you would, but because you like kisses. How would I have known that it was my kisses you wanted? I needed you to choose me Freddie. To want to give me a chance to prove that I’m worthy of you. Does that make sense?” Jim kissed Freddie softly, running fingers through his hair.

Freddie looked confused, and was quiet for a few moments, but it was a comfortable silence wrapped in each other’s arms.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were a police officer?” inquired Freddie, eyes wide. “That’s huge.” Freddie’s face brightened. “Do you still have the uniform?”

Jim shook his head with a laugh.

“It’s never been a secret sweetheart” said Jim, shaking his head, catching Freddie’s deflection. “It’s just never come up in conversation between us.”

Freddie thought for a while. “Think you’ll ever go back?”
“To Ireland? Or the police?” asked Jim, kissing his nose.

“Well….both?” asked Freddie.

“OK… I’m gonna decode that into Freddie speak” Jim said with a chuckle. “I’m not going anywhere darling. I want to be with you for as long as I can before you start touring.”

“Will you come with us when we tour?” Freddie asked sleepily.

“I’d love to sweetheart, but I need my job. I think we’ve had this chat before hey…without my job I can’t stay in London.”

“So, if you didn’t have your job, would you come?” Freddie asked hopefully, raising his face for a kiss.

“Well….yes…but I’d need a job, I couldn’t live off you. That wouldn’t be fair. You need all your money for world domination.” Jim squeezed Freddie. “As for re-joining the force…I’m not sure. I don’t want to do bar work all my life, but I’m not qualified for anything else, and being gay and in the force…well it’s just very difficult” Jim mused.

“I thought you had someone” Freddie blurted out, examining his nails. “I …might have fancied you a bit….oh God!” Freddie cried “…you’ve seen me hungover, and tied to the bed, and upset…..”

“And I’m still here sweetheart!” Jim chuckled. “There were about a million things I wish I hadn’t seen happen to you, but every one of them allowed me to get close to you….really close…like this.” Jim squeezed Freddie.

“In your policeman’s opinion, what will happen to Bill?” Freddie asked quietly.

“Well, that’s really up to you sweetheart. I reported what I witnessed, which is why the Inspector asked to see your injuries. I’m sure they will speak with John Reid now that you have given them his card, but ultimately it’s whether you press charges. If you decide you want to go ahead, you’ll have me, and Brian, and Roger and Deaky all behind you, but if it’s too hard for you then it’s likely he’ll get a lighter sentence. No pressure though honey, it has to be your decision.”

Both men were deep in thought for a moment or two, when the music stopped.

“End of side A” Jim whispered into Freddie’s temple leaving little kisses.

He got out of bed to turn the record over.

He turned to smile softly at Freddie when the music began playing.

Freddie had kicked off the blanket and rolled onto his stomach.

He flick his feet up in fun, and slapping his own bottom he winked at Jim “I need more” he said playfully.

Jim would learn that Freddie needed a lot. A lot of sex, a lot of love, and a lot of affection, but for now he quickly stripped off his boxers, and grabbed the lube.

Settling behind Freddie on his hands and knees he teased gently at the opening with his fingers, before pushing inside.

“Please, please, just fuck me darling, I need it!” begged Freddie.
Jim would teach Freddie to love, and to treat himself with care, but for now Jim needed relief, and out of the two of them he was the loudest this time.

The boys had started their dinner by the time Freddie and Jim arrived back at the house. They had tried to be polite, but Roger was starving, and to be around a hungry Roger wasn’t pleasant.

Roger took in Freddie and Jim’s body language - linked hands and smiling faces - and he couldn’t help himself.

“You have fucked haven’t you?” he grinned with a mouthful of food.

Freddie laughed and said “He made me fucking cry!”

Jim wanted to hide under the coffee table. He knew his blush could have lit up the room.

That was Freddie – so shy and reserved one minute, and brazen the next.

Jim glanced up at the amused faces of the others, they looked relaxed, they knew he hadn’t actually hurt Freddie.

Brian gave Jim a discrete thumbs up.

Jim felt himself completely relax with the band for the first time since he had known them.

Although not musical beyond his teens, he felt like a part of them, like a roadie.

They made him very welcome.

Jim being a bit older didn’t seem to bother them much either. They spoke openly - and frequently about their private lives - and nothing seemed to be sacred. Jim found himself laughing loudly along with them.

The boys seemed pleased, and perhaps a little relieved that they had somebody to share Freddie with. Another back stop on the team.

Jim had hoped that Freddie would come home with him that night.

He knew Freddie was beat, and there would be no more action, but he wanted to do the homely thing – make a little nest for him, hold him through the night, and wake him up with a cup of tea in the morning.

Freddie had made it clear that he was home for the night when he changed into his kimono midway
through a game of ‘What would you rather?!’….which deteriorated quickly into ‘Who would you rather?’ Still, it pleased Jim that when Freddie re-entered the room he sat in the crook of his leg, and wrapped his blanket around the both of them.

It warmed Jim that Freddie knew his arms would be open if he needed affection – as well as sex.

Jim noticed that Freddie became uncomfortable when he put on his jacket to leave. He was on shift for the next few days, so he needed to go home and organise himself for work. He would have happily stayed, if Freddie had asked him.

Freddie slumped down on the piano stool, his blanket trailing around him like a royal mantle. His hand fell heavily on the keys, playing low notes out of sequence.

Jim wrapped his arms around him from behind and kissed his cheek.

“Come outside with me for a moment” he asked.

When they were outside, Jim poked his cigarette between Freddie’s lips to give him a drag, then cradled him in his arms.

“Why are we out here?” asked Freddie, face pressed up against Jim’s chest.

“I wanted you to see the stars..” said Jim romantically.

Freddie giggled.

“…and I wanted to see you smile. What’s the matter?” he asked.

Freddie shrugged. “It’s just weird isn’t it? I don’t know how to act. Are you leaving? Is this it? Will I see you again? I’m used to a slap on the arse and a wink goodbye.” Freddie giggled.

“Oh Freddie” Jim squeezed him tighter.

If he was honest, Jim was secretly relieved. He knew this was a bigger moment for Freddie than for himself – trusting that Jim was genuine, that he hadn’t just wanted him for sex, that he wasn’t alone in the world.

“You can’t get rid of me that easily” Jim chuckled squeezing Freddie’s buttocks. “This ass is mine!” Freddie giggled.

“Sweetheart, my home is yours OK? You can stay with me whenever you want to. I’m just going home to get ready for work tomorrow. You’re tired and dressed for bed, so I thought you wanted to stay home tonight.”

Jim pulled Freddie’s blanket higher around his shoulders.

Freddie reached up, standing on his tip toes, he wrapped his arms around Jim’s neck, pulling him close for a passionate kiss.

He turned to go back into the house.

“Freddie…” Jim called. Freddie turned, and Jim slapped his arse hard making his yelp.

“That is goodnight…and you bet your ass I will see you tomorrow.”
Encounters: I suck your mind, You blow my head

Chapter Summary

Freddie and Jim settle into their lives as a couple, and Jim’s life is certainly more exciting as a consequence!
It’s not all plain sailing though when the media corners Freddie after a Queen show, and reminds him that his new found fame affects all of those close to him.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is mostly just smut lovies….but you know how it is - new couple, gagging for ages 😊😊 The plot is also moving – honest!

Jim and Brian watched Freddie rush from roadie to roadie, targeting demands and scattering affection with his every interaction.

Freddie was wearing his stage costume ready to perform - a full length Mercury messenger of the Gods outfit - which did give him the appearance of being a marble statue.

Alabaster ivory slick to every inch of his skin, with wings at his heels and wrists.

For the stage crew, it was an experience working with Freddie. Rock musicians were historically butch. Long haired, tattooed, beer swilling beef cakes.

It was interesting to watch how masculine heterosexual men responded to him, as they found themselves meeting his every demand with pleasure, and not really understanding why.

Although it was at odds with his relationship with the man himself, Jim loved to watch Freddie hypnotise the people he worked with into doing his bidding. It amused him.

This was public Freddie.

The show biz face.

The diva.

Jim would get the private Freddie all to himself later, and it meant so much to him to watch the layers fall off, and the man he loved be revealed.

Jim smiled as Freddie threw his arms around John Reid, and gave him a big smooch on the cheek.

Brian laughed. “Do you think he knows he’s not meant to behave like that in front of his boyfriend?”

Jim laughed out loud affectionately. “Brian, your guess is as good as mine. I don’t think he actually knows the terms of a loving relationship.”
Jim pondered on that for a moment. He hadn’t actually told Freddie how strongly he felt for him, how could he possibly know?

Jim continued “He’s young, and something tells me he’s a quick learner.”

Brian sniggered. “He’s no younger than me mate. Doesn’t it bother you?”

Jim thought for a while before answering.

It used to bother him.

During Freddie’s time with Paul, he had thought he couldn’t tolerate flirtatious behaviour from Freddie towards other men.

He understood him a little better now, yet barely understood him at all.

There was a depth to the man he loved – some of his appeal was just under the surface – but the rest, he suspected he wouldn’t live long enough to understand.

“Have you ever held a butterfly in your palm?” Jim asked.

Brian nodded, confused. “Yes….I’m a nature enthusiast.”

“Right, then you’ll know that if you start to close your fingers around it, the butterfly will either fly off, or you will crush it’s little wings” continued Jim, hoping he was making sense on some level.

The analogy was becoming clear to Brian.

“I wouldn’t change a thing about Freddie.” Jim continued. I love his character. He’s very affectionate. If I asked him to stop being affectionate, then I would be asking him to stop being himself. I don’t want to crush that spirit. Over time I’ll find out what his needs are from this relationship, and hopefully meet them.”

Brian was just beginning to grasp how strong Jim really was.

“What about you though Jim, what do you need?” asked Brian curiously.

Jim was quiet for a moment before he said “I just need Freddie.”

“Think he’ll press charges against Bill Reid?” Brian inquired.

Jim hesitated, looking over at Freddie. “I don’t think so. I would never say anything to him, because he would think I don’t believe in him – and I do – 100% - but I don’t think he’s strong enough. The law is stacked unfairly against the survivor in domestic abuse cases. They have to face that person in court and be cross examined. It takes a lot of self believe to do that, and invariably the perpetrator has knocked that out of them. Then there’s the problem of Freddie blaming himself…and he’s male. Bill would more likely be tried for common assault than domestic abuse, and the sentencing would be lighter – two men in a fight seems fairer somehow in the eyes of a jury. That said, Freddie surprises me every day…” Jim smiled affectionately. “…he knows we would support him if he decided to go ahead.”

Freddie looked up, and saw Brian and Jim staring at him.

His face broke into a beaming smile and he came hurtling towards the bar, when a man crossed his path, and nipped his bottom.
Freddie’s face creased in anger. He turned to the man, placed both hands firmly on his chest and pushed him hard. “I’m a taken man, you idiot” he snapped.

It was comical to watch, but nevertheless Jim flushed with pride.

Freddie unlocked the gate to the bar, and jumped up the steps in one leap.

He rushed at Jim and pulled him down for a kiss.

Jim laughed breathlessly. “You are not supposed to be behind here.”

Freddie shrugged “I know.”

Jim pushed Freddie up against the bar seeking another kiss.

“Hey, don’t get me dirty!” he shrieked, but didn’t protest for long.

“Ooooh I want to get you very very very dirty” laughed Jim, pulling Freddie into a deep kiss passionately, and not letting him up for air.

When he eventually pulled away, Freddie wrapped his arms around Jim’s neck and glancing up at him through long eyelashes said “You have to stay here now. I can’t move” he cast his eyes downwards hoping Jim would follow his gaze. He didn’t, so Freddie pulled him close and whispered in his ear.

“Enormous hard on. Nowhere to hide it in my costume.” Jim blushed red, and looked down.

Freddie’s costume was indeed so tight, there was no way his state of arousal wouldn’t be obvious to a blind person.

“Mmmmmmm” groaned Jim, feeling his own answering response.

“Brian, watch the bar” Jim ordered.

Brian saluted, covering his eyes with his free hand.

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Jim shuffled Freddie giggling off the bar and into the store room.

He lifted him up onto the piano.

“You are a minx” Jim growled, kissing Freddie hungrily down his throat and chest, not caring if he left marks that would be visible to the audience.

Freddie was already in heaven; breathing deeply, and gasping at every touch, crying out as Jim bit on a nipple.

His reaction throbbing against Jim’s thigh.

Jim pushed his hands into Freddie’s costume, and clutching at his waist pressed kisses down his stomach and into his belly button.
Jim forced a teasing hand down the front of Freddie’s costume into his thong, and squeezed his cock firmly.

He stroked a couple of times then pushed his thumb over the head.

Freddie groaned loudly, and sunk his teeth hard into Jim’s shoulder. Already losing control of his hips.

Jim quickly snapped his hand back, winked, and teased “We’re never going to be able to get you out of that costume, I might as well go back to work” he started to walk away.

“You bastard” screamed Freddie breathlessly.

Jim slowly turned around to face him, and what he saw before him nearly finished him.

Freddie was still lying on the piano, hair mused, lips swollen and bitten red, cheeks flushed.

His beautiful soft eyes were black with desire. There were red marks from Jim’s teeth all the way down his torso.

Freddie was already the image of fucked out.

Jim growled and ran back towards him.

He threaded his fingers into Freddie’s hair grasping at it, tilting his head back and exposing his throat for more kisses.

Jim pulled at the fabric of Freddie’s costume trying to slide it off his shoulders and down to his waist.

It was a tussle of fabric, and Freddie was slippery, writhing beneath him. His body on fire from Jim’s assault.

Jim tugged hard and the fabric finally slipped over Freddie’s hips taking his thong with it.

Jim roughly pushed his hands under Freddie’s buttocks, and lifted him higher onto the piano, which tinkled in protest.

Freddie’s cock was already weeping, and Jim pushed his tongue into the head relishing his taste, before taking all of him into his mouth.

It was a risk. His boss could have walked in at any time, and Chris was due to start his shift. Jim didn’t even know if Brian could pull a pint.

He didn’t care. If a shotgun was held to his head, Jim would continue to take Freddie deeply into his throat.

Freddie was wrecked.

Trembling uncontrollably, and thrusting deeply into Jim’s mouth, almost violently.

Jim knew it wouldn’t be long.

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Freddie lay on top of the piano still breathless, and moaning softly as each little aftershock ran through him.

Jim lovingly rolled Freddie’s outfit back up, kissing every inch of skin as he covered it.

Freddie was helpless.

Jim lifted Freddie’s arms as though dressing a child. When he had the outfit in place, he ran his hands up from Freddie’s arms to his shoulders, pressing soft little butterfly kisses to his face. He looked into Freddie’s eyes and whispered “You are perfect.”

Jim left Freddie to recover, and wandered back out to the bar, trying to appear nonchalant.

He was thankful that he was wearing loose jeans and a long shirt. He momentarily considered going to the bathroom to relieve his own hard on, but changed his mind - he would bury it inside Freddie after the show.

“God, what the hell were you doing back there? A man could die of thirst!” John Reid quipped, as he stood waiting at the bar with his wallet in his hand.

I guess the answer to Jim’s question about Brian’s bar skills would be a no then.

Jim couldn’t help but smile.

“Sorry John, what can I get you?”

“Another round please Jim, and Freddie if you’ve got him” said John raising his eyebrows.

Jim should lie, this was Freddie’s boss, he could say he hadn’t seen Freddie, but the smile on his face gave him away.

“You sly dog” John winked as he handed over a note. “It’s about time. What have you done with him?”

Jim flushed. “He won’t be long. He was on the piano last time I saw him” Jim said truthfully.

Just then Freddie popped his head around the door. His cheeks still smouldering. “I need a strong man” he said cheekily.

“Didn’t you just have one?!” John said with amused sarcasm.

“I m-mean to help me move the piano” Freddie stammered looking up at Jim coyly through his hair.

John put down his drink and summoned to the roadies.

“Well I never…a self-conscious Freddie Mercury. This is a very rare day indeed.”

John watched Freddie duck back behind the door.
He was glad that he and Freddie hadn’t ended up going there. Not that he didn’t find him attractive – and time wise he wouldn’t have thought twice – but in truth he had too much respect for the man that the boy was becoming.

No, this would become a very lucrative business relationship indeed.

Having caught up on his shifts finally, Jim was lucky enough to be able to watch Queen from the audience that evening.

He had never seen a full concert before.

He had always been working, or lugging equipment for the band, or attempting to control those around Freddie - Paul Prenter, Bill Reid, Winnie Kirchberger – all claiming to care about him, but all putting him in harm’s way, one way or another.

Jim seated himself at a table close to the stage accompanied by John Reid, and a couple of smartly dressed lads that Jim assumed were associates of John’s. They all seemed in the mood for a good night.

Jim assessed John as the band finished setting up. He didn’t look even slightly concerned that his latest investment were just about to represent him, and Jim couldn’t be prouder of the boys’ professionalism – at such a young age.

John suddenly leaned over to Jim, and gestured to two women who were making their way to the next table. Jim hadn’t seen them before, they didn’t look the type to frequent The Market Tavern. “Freddie’s family” said John.

Jim was suddenly alert.

Freddie had never mentioned his family to Jim, and he certainly had never suggested that they meet.

The women had a beautiful skin tone – just like Freddie. One woman was much older than the other - mother and daughter, Jim surmised. Freddie’s Mum was small of stature like Freddie, and he recognised Freddie’s lips. She was wearing traditional Indian dress, in beautiful colours, and Jim was reminded of Freddie’s blanket. On closer inspection Jim noticed that the younger woman was in fact a teenage girl. He didn’t dare to age her, given Freddie’s youthful appearance, she could have been his younger sister, or his twin.

The older woman looked around rather nervously, but she was smiling, as though torn between guilt and excitement. Neither of the women ordered a drink.

Under any other circumstances Jim might have gone over and introduced himself, but something held him back. He told himself it was that they may not speak English, but perhaps he was being dishonest with himself. Although the women looked open and friendly, he didn’t feel it was his place. He also wanted Freddie to introduce them when he was good and ready.

He thought for a moment about Freddie’s heritage. They had never discussed where he came from.
Jim had told Freddie all about Carlow the night he had arrived back from Portsmouth, distressed and mute, but Freddie was just that – mute – he didn’t return any information about his own start in life.

Perhaps he was Indian then. There were elements of his features that looked Indian, but not quite. There were also hints of a slight twang to his accent, which Jim had dismissed as a local dialect. A slight character in his overall received pronunciation.

Jim didn’t have time to ponder any further when the lights dimmed, and Brian took centre stage.

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The show was thrilling!

Queen opened with ‘Now I’m Here’ which Jim hadn’t heard before, and he loved the intro.

Freddie’s crystal clear voice rang out, but he kept himself hidden for the first few opening bars. Jim was amused when the audience looked around for him, and there was a communal gasp when he revealed himself in full Mercury dress.

There was no other band in the world like Queen.

The charisma and cohesion of the band blew Jim away.

The power of their performance, lilting into soft moving moments.

Brian and Freddie’s simultaneous solo performances in ‘White Queen’ had his senses bouncing from one side of the stage to the other, while maintaining his full attention at the juxtaposition.

He watched his man up on the stage, dazzling the crowd with sex and audacity.

His eyes wandered around the audience, taking in their excitement and pleasure when Freddie the performer interacted with them, in a way that Freddie the man wouldn’t dare.

Jim was viewing the concert from a point of view that no other member of the audience possibly could.

He could see a very young man under the makeup. He watched Freddie posturing, planting his feet as wide as possible while flinging his arms out, and tilting his head back, making himself larger than life up on the stage. Jim loved the little giggles, and the mannerisms that were so familiar to him.

Jim’s heart warmed when he saw the surprise on Freddie’s face at the presence of his family. He blew them kisses from the stage, as they made their way towards the exit. It was an odd time for them to leave, just as things were warming up, but Jim could see the love and pride they had for their son and brother.

After a quick costume change, the band were back.

This time Freddie was the counterpoint to his plaster saint figure – seductive in black satin as he ran from one side of the stage to the other.

Brian gently coaxed him down when with an impish smile Freddie started to climb the stage rigging, swinging from a pole while belting out ‘Stone Cold Crazy’, giving the audience the impression that he actually was.
Jim laughed out loud when he heard the seaside ditty Freddie had teased him with as an opener to a track aptly entitled ‘Brighton Rock’. Remembering their day at Brighton so fondly, not only as a celebration of Freddie recovering his ability to communicate, but with hindsight that he now had his man.

Jim’s jaw trailed the floor when Brian commenced his guitar solo, showcasing his talent with a five minute long piece which crossed genres.

The band reversed their usual repertoire by having a little fun with their rock and roll covers for the first encore, and being brave enough to chance leaving the performance of ‘Liar’ to their second encore – having judged the crowd well enough to know they would be called back a second time.

From the moment Freddie’s platform shoes hit the stage for the second encore, Jim could see how very hyped he was.

Pouring with sweat, and channeling colossal streams of energy - much too large from him - through his body, and out into the audience. His voice, that which you imagine to come from a much larger man – perhaps an opera singer.

He performed with such aggression, but Jim could only see an excited boy, thrilled and disbelieving of the applause and admiration the band received.

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The moment the bar lights went up, Freddie was in Jim’s arms.

He literally ran from the stage and threw himself at Jim, wrapping his legs around Jim’s hips, passionately kissing his face and neck, shining with euphoria.

Not a care who may be watching.

Freddie was halfway there. Jim could feel that Freddie was already hard against his own stomach, turning Jim on like a gas powered kitchen appliance.

“I need you, I need you now” Freddie repeated in Jim’s ear at a low growl. Jim, swept up in the urgency, carried him towards the bathroom.

As soon as Jim sat Freddie on the closed toilet lid, and turned to lock the door, Freddie was on him.

He had unbuckled Jim’s belt and was working down his zip, hands down the back of Jim’s boxers to free his as soon as humanly possible.

Jim gasped as he felt warm heat around his cock. Freddie was on his knees, eyes closed, concentrating hard on the task at hand. The view, and sensations were a little too much for Jim, who was already struggling with containing his groans in such a public place.

Suddenly jumping to his feet, Freddie had his arms around Jim’s neck, and one leg wrapped around his hip.

“Need you inside me now” Freddie gasped between moans, nipping at Jim’s neck almost attempting to climb him.
Jim, not accustomed to receiving passion at such break neck speed wasn’t sure where to begin.

Freddie was already peeling his costume down his arms.

“Sweetheart, are you hiding lube in that costume?” Jim gasped.

Freddie shook his head, dropping once again to his knees to take Jim’s cock deep into his mouth.

He was back on his feet in an instant, his smile ear to ear, his dark eyes half lidded.

“There….you’re slicked” he gasped, yanking his costume down over his hips.

“No darling, I'll hurt you” Jim gasped, but he knew his argument was feeble. He had never been so turned on. His knees already trembling, and his cock about to explode.

Freddie grabbed Jim’s hand and pushed his fingers into his mouth, sucking seductively and staring wide eyed into Jim’s soul.

“There, you’re done. Go!” hissed Freddie with an entrancing smile, pulling Jim’s hand over his hip.

“Aaaaaaaaaah Freddie!” Jim growled, suddenly feeling like a teenage boy stuck in a wet dream.

Freddie was loud - extremely loud - and there was no controlling his thrusts onto Jim.

Jim with his back to the toilet door, was supporting Freddie’s weight, who with his legs wrapped around Jim’s hips, was fucking himself violently on Jim’s cock.

Jim had never felt such intense relentless pleasure, and wasn’t sure how he was even supporting his own weight – never mind Freddie’s.

“So….aah…we’ve got ourselves a power bottom” Jim attempted a joke, but Freddie simply groaned louder, and thrust harder.

A loud knock on the door reverberated down Jim’s back.

“Have some decorum!” an angry voice yelled through the door.

Freddie reached up his arms, and wrapping his fingers over the toilet door, pulled himself higher up Jim’s body to poke his head over the top. “Have you never needed it real bad?!” he growled at the stranger, while Jim was still inside him.

If not in the throes of passion, Jim would have died of embarrassment, and he suspected Freddie would have felt the same.

As it was, Jim needed to be inside Freddie like he needed air.

Brian wandered into the men’s bathroom chatting with a couple of friends. He saw the back of Freddie’s head, heard their groans, and made a hasty retreat, trying to wrap his hands over both his eyes and ears at the same time.

“Do not go in there!” he yelled on the way out, to the customers attempting to get in.
“Do we need a cleaner, or a maintenance man?” Jim heard someone ask.

“No!” screamed Brian. “Tell them not to go in there too!”

Jim - hands full of Freddie - couldn’t stop if he had wanted to.

He attempted to take control of the situation, walking them both back away from the door towards the toilet.

Freddie bounced on Jim, and winced.

“Stop, stop, stop!” whispered Jim breathlessly. “You’re going to hurt yourself.”

“Don’t you dare stop – aaaaahh!” Freddie shouted loudly through his orgasm.

The sound alone sent Jim over the edge.

Trembling violently under both their weight, Jim withdrew and dropped Freddie down onto the closed toilet lid.

Both were breathing hard, and sweating profusely.

The cold tiles were welcome on Freddie’s back.

Jim brought his forehead down to Freddie’s. Staring into his wide beautiful eyes, he smiled and gasped “You’re going to be the death of me.”

As reality rushed to mind, Jim littered gentle kisses on Freddie’s hot face, and said “I can’t keep doing this sweetheart. I work here.”

Freddie smiled sweetly, with such satisfied contentment that Jim knew he’d do it again and again and again.

Faced with the challenge of getting out of the bathroom with the least embarrassment, it was decided that Jim would go first.

Washing his hands and face in the now deserted bathroom, he made his way back into the bar using his key to go through the storeroom. He picked up an ‘Out of Order’ sign from the cleaners cupboard and popped it outside the door, so Freddie could have his privacy to get a wash and back comfortably into his costume.

Jim’s way was clear, and nobody paid him any attention as he nodded to Chris, and made his way back onto the guest side of the bar, pulling up a stool beside John Reid, who was talking with Deaky and packing the gear away.

Jim was grateful of a few minutes silence.

He knew there was no way he would ever believe what had just happened to him back there. That he….Jim Hutton….bar man from Ireland….had just had a quickie in the toilet with a rock star.
If he’d ever been the kind of man who would kiss and tell, he would be approaching the group of journalists gathering in the corner, and telling the tale, just so it would be in print and he could read it out loud to himself one day.

As it happened, Jim was starting to feel a little uneasy.

Freddie was a runaway train when it came to sex. His appetite was extraordinary. His drive – much like that for life – was phenomenal, but Jim felt he had missed a trick.

He shouldn’t be sitting in a bar while Freddie cleaned himself up in a public bathroom.

Freddie should be in Jim’s shower, having his hair and body lovingly washed before climbing into bed, where he could be wrapped up warm and held until he slept.

Jim had to be stronger. He was being pulled into Freddie’s world, when he should be gently encouraging Freddie to expect more.

I’m going to take him out, thought Jim. Properly, on a date.

A nice restaurant, they would get dressed up.

It would be tricky, they would have to pretend to be business associates, but that didn’t matter. He could wine him and dine him, and sixty-nine him in the privacy of his home later on.

Jim would treat Queen’s front man like a king.

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There was an unexpected flurry of activity, as Freddie made his way out of the bathroom.

He looked wonderful. A little tired, but only Jim would have spotted that. His makeup was back in its rightful place, and he looked cool, comfortable and refreshed.

Journalists and cameramen seemed to swarm, and in seconds Jim couldn’t see Freddie at all.

Jim stood immediately and alerted Brian – who was closer - to Freddie’s plight.

Brian stood on his tip toes, towering above the others to see what was going on. He wasn’t acting quickly enough for Jim’s security minded brain. He waded over himself, working his way through the sea of bodies and equipment until he seized Freddie’s upper arm.

“What has that to do with my music” stammered Freddie quietly, head down. “P-please let me pass.”
“What do your parents make of that, aren’t they practicing Zoroastrians? Do they approve of your revealing costumes?” asked another journalist, as a camera flashed in his face.

“Please don’t upset my parents!” Freddie pleaded, panic becoming more evident.

“Alright that’s it!” Jim shouted authoritatively. He wrapped an arm around Freddie’s shoulders, and led him through the group.

“Is this your bodyguard, or your lover Freddie?” shouted a persistent journalist, as Jim led Freddie behind the bar to safety.

John, Brian, Roger and Deaky followed in their path.

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“What’s all this?” barked Derek Green, appearing in the store room doorway. “Why are you all behind my bar? Hutton, I’m speaking to you!”

Freddie was sitting on a stool, taking large gulps from a pint of iced water.

His breathing began to slow to the speed at which Jim stroked his hair.

The boys were griping to each other generally about the rudeness of the press, and how disinterested they were in Queen’s music, and instead wanted to talk about their private lives.

“How did they find out about my parents?” Freddie gasped. “My God what if they tell them?!” his face crumpled as he momentarily headed back towards a state of panic.

He suddenly gripped Jim’s arm “We have to be a lot more discreet Jim. It can’t get out that I’m gay, it can’t” he said sadly. “The band, we’ll get no more gigs, and no one will want us.”

Freddie grabbed Roger’s hand with his spare hand as though he could protect his precious Queen with the gesture.

Jim shushed him gently, while he addressed his boss.

“The press just swarmed Derek. I had to bring these boys back here for their safety” Jim explained.

“There’s nobody out there now. Pub’s empty! There’s too much happening around him…. ” Derek snapped, pointing towards Freddie. “…and that incident report you filled out about my broken toilet door Hutton, it’s full of holes, I expect it filled out properly.”

Jim pulled Freddie towards him and kissed his temple. “I’m just going to check it’s safe for you sweetheart, and we’ll all head home together.”

Jim made his way out into the bar to satisfy himself that it was in fact empty.

He’s was so disappointed for Freddie. It had been a wonderful night. The show had been fantastic – Freddie’s family had even seen him perform – he’d been satisfied every which way, and then the press had happened.

Jim was so relieved that he had been around to assist Freddie.
If ever a need arose for Freddie to have a bodyguard, Jim would apply in a heartbeat. It seemed too easy that one of the few things that Jim was qualified in, could be a niche position in Freddie’s entourage. Perhaps the job of Jim’s life!

Jim made his way back into the store room. “The coast is clear. Come on, grab your bags” Jim said, picking up Freddie’s pack.

Jim turned to his boss “I’ll come in a hour before my shift tomorrow Derek, and pack away the band’s equipment. I’d sooner get this one home.” Jim didn’t wait for his bosses reply.

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The boys wearily made their way towards home.

Jim wrapped an arm around a very quiet, very thoughtful Freddie. He remembered his thoughts earlier about the date.

That would cheer Freddie up.

“Sweetheart, would you like to come on a date with me soon? Somewhere nice. I’ll book a charming cosy restaurant, we can get dressed up – nice suits, the works – and talk the night away over some good food and a bottle of wine. What do you say? I want to spoil you a little bit.”

Freddie was quiet.

“Would you like that honey?” Jim asked quietly.

Freddie shook his head.

“Sorry darling?” said Jim, thinking he had been mistaken.

Freddie remained quiet.

“Did you hear what I said?” Jim asked softly.

“Thank you for your kind offer, but no thank you” Freddie said politely.

“Aww, come on, you do, it will be fun!” cajoled Jim.

“I said no!” Freddie shouted, and ran off into the distance.
Chapter Summary

Freddie learns the consequences of playing rough, but soon finds another outlet for his skill set.
Jim receives some advice from an unexpected source, and despite his insecurities, discovers that he very much has Freddie’s attention, but he may need to be patient.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the epic wait lovelies, it wouldn’t go down on the page!

A light shone on the ceiling, as a car passed by.
Jim laid on his back. One arm behind his head, wondering if this is what heartache felt like.
How was he back here so soon – sleeping on the sofa without Freddie?
He had gone over and over every word in his head. Every line. Every response.
Had he been too pushy?
What had he said that was so wrong?
Jim had honestly thought that Freddie would be thrilled at the idea of going to a nice restaurant. Good food, and Jim to spoil him.
How had Jim judged him so wrongly?
Jim wondered if Freddie was concerned about being seen out with him, after the press intrusion earlier in the evening.
He dared not think about that. What would that mean for their relationship, if he couldn’t be seen out with Freddie at all?
Something took over Freddie when he needed sex. He needed it then, he couldn’t wait, if Jim wasn’t there, where would he go for it?
Should Jim even be offering himself up in that way, if it was going to end with Freddie being so upset?
Could he ever say no to Freddie anyway?
Jim still couldn’t believe what he had done with Freddie in the bathroom.
It would be an amazing experience – my God, it had been an amazing experience – if he didn’t care
for Freddie so much.

Freddie had put himself at such risk.

There were people everywhere. Yes, he was in a gay bar, but it was still a public place, who actually has intercourse in a public place?!

Jim knew what it felt to want somebody so badly.

He had spent the last few months wanting Freddie just like that, but he had held on, and when his opportunity had come around, he had made sure the setting was perfect, so that Freddie would have the best experience.

Jim had nearly had an argument with Roger on the way home.

He had been concerned that the media might have been waiting for Freddie up ahead, that he was at risk somehow out there on his own. Roger had told him that he was being stupid. That he didn’t know Freddie at all, and that he had managed his life perfectly well before Jim came along.

Had he?

Had he really?

Jim thought that questionable.

Although he had to agree with Roger on one point - that the one place Freddie would go to brood would be home to his blanket.

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It was a little after 3 am when Jim heard the sound – a light footfall on the stairs.

He hadn’t slept a wink.

A blanketed silhouette appeared in the living room doorway, before quietly making it’s way over to the sofa.

Jim shuffled towards the sofa back, turning onto his side to allow Freddie to lie beside him. Freddie laid down, and tucked his blanket securely around Jim.

“I’m sore” Freddie whispered sadly.

Jim chuckled “I’ll bet you are.”

He slid a large palm over Freddie’s hip, and massaged at his lower back.

Freddie snuggled closer, nuzzling Jim’s neck with his nose and scattering little kisses under his jaw.

They fell into a contented sleep, probably for the first time all night.

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Jim breathed deeply, and soft hair tickled his nose – Freddie.

His hand was still on Freddie’s lower back, which now felt very warm, and he continued to massage where he had left off.

Jim slowly opened his eyes to find soft brown ones staring back at him. Freddie playfully snapped his eyes closed again with a giggle.

Jim gave him a tickle making his squeal.

Loving, playful Freddie was back.

The harsh words of the previous night had been forgotten….and forgotten they would be. If Freddie didn’t want to talk about something, it was as though it had never happened at all.

Freddie stretched out onto his stomach, and grimaced.

“Still sore?” Jim asked with a wry smile.

Freddie wrinkled up his nose and nodded sadly.

“That’s it” said Jim firmly “I’m benching you for a few days.”

Freddie looked horrified. “No! You can’t do that….days??”

Jim thought he must have imagined it, but he thought he saw tears forming.

He quickly pulled Freddie in for a warm kiss, wrapping his arms around him, and holding his head close to his chest.

“No sex until you feel better, but you’re mine to cuddle whenever I want to.” He squeezed Freddie warmly.

Freddie seemed relieved, and the playfulness returned. “I still think that’s a cruel and unusual form of punishment” he quipped, pouting.

Jim chuckled holding him closer.

“Haven’t you anything else you can do today to wear off all that energy? Something that gets you into less trouble.” Jim teased, nuzzling Freddie’s hair. “Why don’t you give Peter a ring? See if he’s up for a match or two?” Jim suggested.

Freddie pouted. “Sore” he said resolutely.

Jim chuckled with his eyebrows raised. “That bad?”

Freddie nodded. His eyes were wide. Jim could tell he was seeking maximum sympathy.

Jim pushed himself up onto his knees, and unraveled Freddie out of his blanket.

Starting at his shoulders, Jim took his time massaging Freddie’s back, interweaving little kisses to the soft skin along the way.

Freddie was in heaven. His head resting on his folded arms, his eyes closed gently, and a soft smile
playing around his lips.

This kind of attention was exactly what he’d been aiming for.

Jim smiled to himself. He enjoyed indulging him.

Jim rubbed his thumbs in circles over the base of Freddie’s spine, before leaning over him, placing a soft kiss on his cheek, and whispering in his ear “Where is it sore sweetheart?”

Jim quickly sat back, and dropped little kisses on his buttocks. He lapped his tongue over the opening, in gentle little circles, placing tender kisses.

Freddie gasped.

Another first then, thought Jim, feeling very pleased with himself.

“J-Jim, what are you doing?” Freddie stammered.

Jim lapped softly between words “Just a few little healing kisses sweetheart. I can stop if you don’t like it?” Jim teased.

Freddie groaned, and pushed his body towards Jim “I love it!” he whimpered.

It was cruel, but Jim couldn’t help it, he stroked his tongue firmly down Freddie’s perineum.

Freddie groaned.

“Right” said Jim with a chuckle. “I need to get to work to clean up your mess from last night, and I think you need to go back to your bed for a few more hours, you had a big night last night.”

Freddie squeezed Jim’s hard cock through his shorts. “How can you walk away right now?” Freddie wailed.

“It’s called self-control sweetheart, and I’m thinking you need to learn some” Jim said with a grin.

“Am I too much?” Freddie asked softly. “I’m always too much…even Paul palmed me off to his friends by the hour.”

“No!” Jim was horrified. “Oh darling” he said pulling Freddie close. “I could never get enough of you. My God, I love that you’re insatiable, but we’re not doing it if it hurts you. What sort of pleasure is that for me hey?”

Freddie remained quiet.

Jim cupped Freddie’s cheeks and looked into his eyes. “I promise you Freddie, when I get home tonight you’ll have my undivided attention OK?”

Freddie nodded.

“....but you’re still benched” finished Jim.

Freddie pouted, as Jim pulled him to his feet. His blanket fell to the floor, revealing that Freddie was actually very hard. It took Jim all of his own self control not to drop to his knees in front of him.

Jim picked up Freddie’s blanket and tucked it warmly around his shoulders. Taking Freddie’s hand, he walked him towards the living room door. “Come on. I’m going to take you back to your bed for
another hour or two.”

“Roger is still sleeping” Freddie protested. “He’ll be cross if we wake him.”

“We won’t wake him, we’ll be quiet. Come on, I’m just going to tuck you in.”

Freddie stood frozen to the spot looking very confused.

“Has no one tucked you in before?” asked Jim astonished.


There wasn’t nearly as much to tidy away at the bar from the previous night as Jim had imagined.

His boss didn’t put in an appearance, so Jim helped himself to a coffee and drank it at his leisure before starting his shift.

He might need one or two of those today, after his disturbed night’s sleep.

Jim was so relieved when Freddie came to join him on the sofa, but in the cold light of day he was berating himself for his cowardice.

He still didn’t know what he had done to upset Freddie.

If he didn’t know, he couldn’t apologise, and Jim really wanted to apologise.

He didn’t want to be one of Freddie’s boyfriends who rode roughshod over his feelings and never showed remorse.

Freddie never apologised. It wasn’t in his vocabulary.

Jim chuckled at the thought that it would cause him physical pain to accept his share of the blame.

Jim might feel differently in a few months’ time, but for now, he found it endearing.

Being wrapped in Freddie’s blanket with him meant I’m sorry, sweet kisses up his neck meant I’m sorry, being allowed back into Freddie’s heart after upsetting him was an enormous privilege.

If Freddie was sorry though, he must have thought he’d acted wrongly, and Jim was still in the dark as to the cause of those actions.

Jim was also worried by Freddie’s reaction to his suggestion that they shouldn’t have sex for a few days.

What sort of a man did Freddie think he was, that he would want to inflict pain upon him?!

Was that the kind of man that Freddie was familiar with?

One thing he was sure of was that Jim would need to be very loving towards Freddie in the days that they weren’t having sex.
For one so bold, Freddie was remarkably insecure, but Jim had to accept his role in that. Why couldn’t he tell him how he felt – that he loved him?

That would wrap a layer of security around him surely – it would anyone else - but Jim couldn’t get out of his head what Brian has said about Freddie never having experienced love.

How would he respond?

Jim didn’t expect Freddie to say it back - he would be thrilled if he did - but he would prefer him to mean it.

After all, Jim had felt this way for a lot longer, he’d had time for his feelings to mature.

Despite all the jumbled thoughts in his mind, Jim had to concede that his biggest fear was that Freddie would run – like he had last night – but that he may never come back.

Jim was surprised when Roger, Brian and Deaky filed into the Market Tavern, and propping their guitars up against the bar, pulled up stools, and settled for the duration.

“I don’t suppose you can do us a coffee can you mate?” asked Brian. “It’s a bit early for ale.”

“Sure. Do you all want coffee? I must admit, it’s a surprise to see you here this early” said Jim. “A nice surprise.”

“I’ll have a vodka chaser with mine please” said Roger.

Everyone turned to look at him.

“What??” he cried. “I’m a bit stir crazy after last night.”

“Is Freddie on his way?” asked Jim lining up three coffee cups, and Freddie’s tea cup.

“Freddie has gone with John Reid to see Zandra Rhodes. They’ve got some sketches together for a new look. John has been putting some feelers out for gigs. Says it’s vital we are prepared” said Brian.

“What did you do to him anyway?” asked Roger. “He was sleeping like a baby, took me ages to wake him up when John was at the door.”

“Not in your room Rog surely?” said Deaky with humour.

“Nothing!” said Jim, mystified by what he was being accused of. “I tucked him back in his bed when I got up for work, gave him a kiss, and left him to sleep.”

“I take it you made up then?” asked Deaky.

“I think so” said Jim taking a deep breath. “I’m struggling to apologise, when I still don’t know what I did.”
“Oh….” started Roger, “…speaking of apologies, I owe you one mate.” He clapped Jim’s shoulder.

“I’m so used to Freddie’s boyfriends ordering him around that I went a bit psycho friend on you. I know you were just looking out for him, we do appreciate it mate.”

“Don’t worry about it Roger…. While we are on apologies though….” Jim turned towards Brian, “…I’m so embarrassed by what you saw in the bathroom last night.” Jim’s face was glowing. “It’s as much my fault as Freddie’s. I don’t know what I should have done differently, but I shouldn’t have done that. I am sorry.”

Roger doubled over laughing, slapping his thigh. “That’s our Fred.”

“I’m worried though Roger – has he always been like that?” asked Jim. “I mean…. how long have you known him behave like that?”

Roger laughed. “That would be the same length of time I’ve known Fred….about two years.”

“19 years old though Roger?” Jim continued, his pitch getting higher. “Doesn’t that strike you as odd? Not even legal.”

“Oh my God!” said Brian. “It feels like the old days, before you were a couple. Why are we talking about Freddie’s sex life again?!”

“Yes, let’s change the subject” said Deaky, holding out his cup for more coffee. “What did you say to upset him? I like a riddle.”

“I don’t know Deaky.” Jim’s hands were in his hair. “I asked him if he would like to come on a date with me – a proper one – a nice restaurant, good food, talk the night away, no stress. He did say no politely, and I probably shouldn’t have pushed him, but I thought he was just stressed after the press thing. Anyway, he screamed at me and ran off.”

“Hmmmm…..” said Deaky, staring into his coffee for so long that Jim actually thought he wasn’t going to continue speaking.

“I remember the first time I took Veronica on a proper date – it was horrible.” Deaky shuddered. “When we decided that we wanted to be more than friends, Ronnie’s Dad had this idea that I should treat her differently, take her out, court her, and all that jazz. I booked a nice restaurant, put on my good suit, but I was so nervous I couldn’t say a word to her all night – my best friend! We ditched the restaurant, and ran all the way to Wimpey’s, and instantly became ourselves again. I’ve never asked her on a date again. I think she prefers me where I’m comfortable.”

That was a very long speech for Deaky.

“What’s your point though Deaks? How does that help Jim?” asked Roger looking puzzled.

“What does Freddie hate most in the world?” quizzed Deaky.

“Spiders” said Roger. “…but you can’t kill them” he mimicked Freddie’s accent “…you’ve got to put them outside dear.”

“Hospitals!” said Jim and Brian simultaneously, high fiving each other.

“No…what does Fred hate just after hospitals?” Deaky teased. “Ok, I’ll put it another way…what are you planning to do on this date?” Deaky prompted.
“Fuck in the toilets” offered Roger.


Deaky nodded slowly. “Freddie doesn’t really eat, and he hates talking about himself. You got caught up in your own insecurities mate. It wasn’t you he rejected, it was your idea, and he’s hardly going to draw your attention to the things he hates most about himself.”

And that is why Deaky is the base player, thought Jim. He was solid to have in the background.

“Why don’t we all go?” mused Brian in a flash of inspiration. “Freddie and Jim, you and Veronica, me and Chrissie, Roger and….” Brian laughed out loud. “…for the first time Roger doesn’t have a date!”

Roger nodded with a grin. “Kash….. I’ll ask Kash.”

“He’ll fucking kill you” said Brian.

“Who’s Kash?” shrieked Jim getting excited at the prospect of finally taking Freddie out.

Jim leant down over the bath, swishing his hand through the water, mixing the hot and cold. The bubbles sparkled pearlescent from the Miss Matey bubble bath, making him smile.

Freddie laughed out loud, and leaning over Jim’s shoulder he trickled a little bath oil under the running water. The delicious mix of ginger and ginseng infused into the steam, and Jim smiled softly at him.

“Where do you keep the good stuff?” Jim chuckled. “I looked everywhere for it last time I bathed you, all I could find was the Matey…and you weren’t talking to me” Jim ribbed softly.

Freddie pointed at the Miss Matey bottle, one hand over his mouth to hold in the giggles. “That’s Roger’s.”

Laughing, Jim turned his attention back to the water, and he felt gentle fingers on his back, kneading away at the knots after his shift. It felt like heaven.

“You’re good at that Freddie” said Jim, a little surprised.

“Jim?” Freddie said softly.

“Mmmmm” Jim loved sentences from Freddie that started with his name.

He knew that whatever was about to come would be funny, entertaining, or just sweet. He knew this mostly because Freddie was a little shy to ask.

“You know I’m temporarily out of action…” Freddie said quietly.

Jim looked up at him confused, grimacing when his hand accidentally got caught under the hot tap.

“What do you mean sweetie?”

Freddie looked shyly over his shoulder at his own backside, and raised his eyebrows.
Jim chuckled, and touched his flaming red cheek with the back of his hand. He found it so endearing when Freddie blushed – especially after his post show….show …yesterday.

“You mean after your acrobatic session yesterday?” Jim teased.

Freddie nodded, but remained silent.

“What’s the matter?” Jim asked a little concerned.

Silence.

Jim was becoming alarmed.

“Freddie tell me, are you OK? Do we need to take you to the doctor?”

Freddie bit his lip. The redness in his cheeks wasn’t dissipating.

Quietly he asked “Can I make love to you?”

Jim smiled slowly amused.

“Is that OK? I mean we haven’t tried that before” Freddie said hurriedly.

Jim chuckled, he loved Freddie’s drive. He couldn’t miss a day – he’d missed the morning, that was enough.

Without waiting for a response Freddie reached his hands under Jim’s towel, seeking his cock.

Jim knew exactly what Freddie was doing.

This is how Freddie got his way.

He would choose one of two methods - he would make himself so adorable that Jim couldn’t possibly disappoint him, or he would pay up front in sexual favours.

All those defense mechanisms, arranged strategically to confuse, and to manipulate, and to cause you to love him so damn much that no just wasn’t an option.

Jim laughed, and grabbed Freddie’s hand, pulling him forcefully into a passionate kiss.

Surprised at himself, Jim was rather turned on by the idea, it was a way he could be close to Freddie without hurting him. He wouldn’t do this for anyone but Freddie, he’d had his time as a bottom, it wasn’t his nature.

Freddie stood silently, eyes to the ground, as though waiting to be judged.

“…..are you saying no?” he whispered quietly.

Jim was appalled at how unreasonable Freddie’s thought his request to be, when Freddie accepted Jim willingly most days.

Jim kissed Freddie’s forehead, and looked into his eyes sincerely. “Yes I will bottom for you Freddie. We haven’t done it before, it’ll be another first.”

Freddie dropped his head onto Jim’s shoulder, rubbing his hot cheek against his ear. “You haven’t done it before ?” he asked softly, surprised.
Jim laughed loudly, and rolled his eyes “Yes! Of course I have done it before! Just not with you.”

“Oh” Freddie went quiet. He really didn’t like being laughed at. It made him feel ridiculous.

Jim spun around and pulled him towards his body “Don’t be silly, I’m only joking with you.”

“Don’t you like it?” Freddie asked curiously grinding his hips into Jim’s hardening cock.

“I don’t dislike it, but I don’t scream the house down like you do” said Jim laughing.

Freddie smiled thinking about the first time Jim had made love to him.

“But who knows, everything else we do together is magic” Jim said with a touch of tenderness.

Freddie glowed with pride.

“…oh, just be careful what you do with that thing” Jim squeezed Freddie’s cock gently “… it’s enormous!”

This time, they laughed together.

The heat between them swept away their laughter.

Never taking his eyes from Freddie’s darkening ones, Jim held Freddie’s hand to his mouth and sucked seductively on each finger one by one.

With his hand still in Jim’s mouth, and his eyes never leaving Jim’s, Freddie started to work his way down the muscle of Jim’s chest and firm stomach, pressing passionate kisses.

Jim nearly melted when the heat slid into Freddie’s eyes as he unhooked the towel knotted at Jim’s waist.

It fell to the floor revealing Jim’s very aroused cock.

Without missing a beat, Freddie wrapped his tongue around Jim’s balls, licking softly at the sensitive area behind.

He then took Jim fully into his mouth once again locking his dark eyes with Jim’s.

Jim’s mouth fell open in a gasp releasing Freddie’s fingers.

Freddie took Jim deeply into throat and held him there, suckling gently, and not attempting to hurry.

Jim thought he would explode from the pleasure, and for the second day running, wondered how he was still standing.

Eyes laughing, Freddie reached out a hand and pulled a bottle of lube out of a hidden bath panel, where he’d been keeping the good bath oil.

Never releasing Jim from his mouth, he poured the lube over his hands rubbing them together.
Barely touching, Freddie ran his hands around Jim’s hips, teasing gently at the opening with a slick finger.

He was so gentle that Jim was not at all uncomfortable with the forgotten feeling.

Freddie probed very softly, moving slowly, but oddly he quickly found the right spot, eliciting soft moans from Jim. He started to move his mouth along Jim’s length, distracting him from any discomfort before sliding a second finger alongside the first.

Once again Jim found himself surprised by Freddie. He was oddly accomplished to say he was usually the passive lover. Very sensual, very caring, and very loving.

If this was the real Freddie Mercury, who the hell was the sex starved sprite of yesterday’s bathroom encounter?

Jim could feel himself starting to lose control, and he grabbed Freddie’s shoulders with a breathy chuckle.

“If you want me to last, you need to stop what you’re doing sweetheart.”

With his mouth full, sass slid into Freddie’s very aroused gaze, as he sucked up and down Jim’s cock a couple more times, challenging him to make it stop.

Jim laughed out loud, pulling away “Stop, stop, stop!”

Freddie drizzled more lube over both hands, and Jim raised his eyebrows questioningly.

“Well my cock is bigger than my whole hand, so I don’t know how we’re going to do this” Freddie giggled with an evil tone.

He moved around to Jim’s back never breaking the skin contact at their hips, but rather than getting straight to business as Jim was expecting, Freddie poured lube over Jim’s back and began massaging him sensually, while gently pushing him over the bath.

“Does that feel good darling?” Freddie asked placing a kiss on his cheek.

With Freddie kneading and working at the tight muscles, Jim was in heaven, gasping and moaning with abandonment.

Freddie worked slowly until he was kneading at the strong muscles of his buttocks.

He scattered soft kisses over Jim’s shoulders. “Are you sure you’re still OK with this?” Freddie asked softly, and totally unexpectedly.

Jim’s body was so sensitive it was all he needed.

Freddie pushed in gently, taking it slowly, barely moving until he felt Jim’s body yield around him, and still he continued with shallow, gentle stokes.

Jim wondered about Freddie’s own sensitivity, and how he was not losing control.

Taking his time, Freddie found the sensitive spot and thrust tenderly against it.

Jim’s head was thrown back, eyes shut tight, as though surprised by the force of his own pleasure.

He grunted softly with each of Freddie’s intensifying thrusts, encouraging Freddie to thrust deeper
and harder until it was really quite rough.

Completely forgetting where they were in their passion, neither of the boys cared how loud they were.

Jim grunted loudly as Freddie thrust more forcefully, feeling his orgasm approaching when the bathroom door was suddenly flung open and Roger appeared.

“Jesus fuck!” Jim shouted.

Freddie had his face buried in Jim’s back, trying to cover their bodies with his thin arm.

Roger made a sound that resembled a girlie scream, but recovered the fastest. “Wowsers Fred, didn’t know you could be THAT versatile” said Roger with an impish grin.

“Get out!!” they both screamed, the moment entirely lost.

Roger closed the door with an evil laugh.

Freddie withdrew, and locked the door quickly behind him. “I’m so sorry darling, I’m so sorry, I thought I had locked it.”

Jim chuckled. “Well I lost my flow” he said with good humour. “Shall we get in the bath?”

“No darling” said Freddie tenderly, reaching out for Jim. “Let me take care of you.”

He laid Jim’s abandoned towel on top of the fluffy bath mat, and added his own. “Lie down, on your side.”

Freddie laid behind Jim, every part of his body softly pressed to Jim’s back. He wrapped his leg tenderly over Jim’s hip, slowly pushing back inside Jim who was more than ready, and already sighing loudly with the pleasure.

Freddie pressed kisses into the delicate skin at Jim’s neck and muttered tender encouragements. “Come for me darling.”

“You will have to go harder than that” cried Jim, quickly reaching the heights of passion.

Freddie set about a punishing pace, crying out at the test of holding back from his own imminent orgasm.

He reached a slick hand around Jim’s hip and began stroking with the same vigorous motion.

Jim thrust wildly into Freddie’s hand, as he pushed back into the heat that was Freddie’s cock into his sweet spot, pleasure in every stroke.

“Jim please darling” Freddie begged. “I can’t…” he gasped, “I can’t aaah….”

Jim exploded into Freddie’s hand with a roar. Tightening impossibly on Freddie cock who was already mid orgasm deep inside him, crying out in his own pleasure.
The heat of the water soothed it’s way into Jim’s assaulted muscles.

He stretched out his legs which were curled behind Freddie’s hips, and tried to pull him closer.

Freddie sat cross legged like a little imp, gazing at Jim with that soft loving gaze he held, slightly puzzled as though working on a particularly tough song lyric.

“That is why we need to make love at my house. Less intrusions, more privacy” Jim smiled, smoothing a hand along Freddie’s inner thigh “…more time to cherish you, and love you slowly.”

Freddie and Jim were continually surrounded by people.

Freddie shared a room with Roger, and while he was delighted to be wrapped in Jim’s arms anywhere and everywhere by day, he seemed reluctant to spend the night at Jim’s perfectly available and private home.

Jim had gently tried to tease the reason for this out of him, but Freddie always seemed to have a reasonable excuse, making it feel like it was in Jim’s head.

Freddie was happy to spend some time with Jim at his home, but Jim wanted to set it up as Freddie’s home too.

He wanted him to have some of his things there, so he would be more comfortable.

Jim had gifted Freddie his favourite woollen blanket, but Jim knew that he liked to be wrapped in his own at night.

“Do you want to take me away from the band?” Freddie asked sadly.

Jim clasped his hand, and brought it to his lips.

“No sweetheart, of course not. It’s very important that you maintain your relationship with the boys, they’re your livelihood.”

“You don’t want me to live with you?” Freddie asked softly.

Jim chuckled, squeezing Freddie’s hand. “I can’t win, can I? I meant, you can have two homes. Your home here with the boys, and then when we want some privacy you have a home with me. Somewhere I can take your where we can be as loud as we want.”

Jim expected Freddie to laugh, but he was quiet. He looked like he was mentally working through a lot.

There was a lot Jim still had to learn about Freddie, and a lot that Freddie held very private.

He was prone to long periods of time lost in his own head. He would be wrapped in Jim’s arms, but a million miles away, in a place that Jim couldn’t access.

Jim stroked a finger down Freddie’s cheek to get his attention.

“You know honey, it troubles me that you can’t talk to me. You can tell me absolutely anything. I promise, I won’t judge” said Jim tenderly.

Jim tried to work out that expression on Freddie’s face. He hoped it wasn’t fear.

He clasped Freddie’s hand.
“Did Brian mention that we are all going out on one big date soon? You and me, him and Chrissie, Deaky and Veronica, and Roger…. is working through a long list of contenders.” Freddie smiled softly.

“You know, I’m very proud of you for telling me no the other day, but I would really like to know why? If I say, or do something that you don’t like, you just have to tell me. Talk to me sweetheart.”

Freddie’s silence urged Jim to fill it.

“I never got the chance to congratulate you on the show yesterday….and your Mum and sister came too! Is she your twin? She’s so like you.”

Freddie shook his head.

Jim squeezed Freddie’s hand, completely lost as to what could have caused this change in mood.

“I’d like to meet your family Freddie….whenever you are ready?” Jim had hoped that Freddie would see how serious he was about the relationship, but Freddie now seemed to be bristling.

The atmosphere was getting cooler.

Freddie’s gaze was far away, and he was far from relaxed. He appeared to feel trapped in his own bathtub.

Jim decided he had to change tact altogether.

Jim gently brushed his knuckles against Freddie’s cheek, trying to bring his attention back into the room.

“It’s over sweetheart” he said with humour “…the interrogation.”

Jim stretched out his arms, and tried to drag Freddie towards him, splashing water everywhere.

Freddie spun around, and Jim tried to wrap his legs around Freddie, pulling him back against his chest.

Freddie settled in Jim’s arms, exhaling loudly and tipping his head back onto Jim’s shoulder. Little kisses to his neck.

Freddie was relieved for some reason.

“This is nice hey?” Jim asked carefully splashing warm soapy water onto Freddie’s chest.

Freddie nodded “Mmmmm” he moaned. “I still want to sit on your cock.”

Jim laughed, but inside he was puzzled. He couldn’t get enough of Freddie sexually, but he also had a measure on it. Freddie it seemed, was trying to fill a void.

Suddenly the bathroom filled with Freddie’s laughter, and Jim took his turn to be relieved.

“Who knew Roger would be the only one without a date!” he squealed.

“Who is Kash?” asked Jim.

“My sister” said Freddie.
“Oh…Roger is going to ask Kash out as his date” said Jim.

“No way!” shrieked Freddie. “She is 15 years old….and she’s my sister! I’m gonna kill him.”

Jim roared with laughter.

There was a load rap on the bathroom door.

“Oy, horny pair” yelled Roger. “We’ve been paid for last night. Get your glad rags on, Heaven awaits!”

Freddie’s eyes were huge. He clapped his hands with excitement wrapping his arms around Jim’s neck.

Heaven was Freddie’s world.

A place he was comfortable.

A place he didn’t need to hold anything back.
Encounters: Lily of the Valley

Chapter Summary

Jim learns more about the man he loves when he finds himself by his side for a full day, accompanying him to college, and - very unexpectedly - for afternoon tea with his family.

The boys get some heart stopping news from John Reid – can their dreams actually come true?

Chapter Notes

I’m on 12 hour working days at the moment loves – it’s slowing me down somewhat – but never my love for these characters – enjoy! 😊

“I love when you come out with us Jim” slurred Roger.

He could barely stand, as the drunken group of men made their way down the street.

“Hey, he’s mine!” protested Freddie weakly, fighting sleep as Jim piggy backed him home.

“You must admit though that was the best night ever!” continued Roger. “Nobody got glassed, or beaten, or kidnapped, or vomited….”

“Vomiting is right up there with kidnapping is it Rog?” teased Brian, ever the sober one, even though he’d had several more beers than usual.

“Fred always chucks up!” protested Rog.

“That’s coz you make me eat dodgy food on the way home” whined Freddie.

“It’s never the last ten vodka shots is it Fred?!” said Deaky sarcastically.

“I don’t make you eat dodgy men’s cocks!” stated Roger with a grin, proud of his latest slur.

Jim chuckled. It seemed Roger had no filter when he was very drunk.

“I had the same number of drinks as Jim” stated Freddie haughtily.

Jim laughed out loud. He was still able to walk.

“You had vodka shots Freddie, Jim had beers…” said Deaky. “…and pound for pound Jim can probably drink twice as much as you anyway.”

“But Brian told me to drink clear drinks. Jim had brown ones” stated Freddie, as matter of fact as he could manage.
Deaky turned to Brian “He has a point there Bri.”

Brian shook his head laughing.

Jim had drunk a fair few himself. More than he intended to drink anyway.

He hadn’t said anything before they left, but he had felt nervous going out with Freddie for the first time as his partner.

Wherever Freddie and Roger went, there was trouble.

From the first encounter with Jim Connors, to Paul Prenter and his predators, and Bill Reid scrapping with Sean, there always seemed to be something that happened to Freddie, or that caused him to be upset.

Jim also had his suspicions that he would be carrying Freddie home by the end of the evening. He didn’t mind one bit.

The group had unfortunately bumped into Jim Connors.

Freddie being Freddie, had stuck his tongue out and teased him…but from his safe place, under Jim’s arm.

Jim had totally enjoyed his evening. This group of men were a lot of fun.

Jim had expected Freddie to be off the minute he got inside Heaven, and wasn’t sure how he would cope if Freddie showed an interest in other men.

He needn’t have worried. Freddie stayed by his side all evening.

Showing Jim off to his friends. Introducing Jim as his new man.

Freddie preferred not to sit on chairs, but instead on Jim’s lap.

When the group finally settled into the corner, Freddie laid across Jim’s lap, licking neat vodka out of his glass, and making doe eyes at him when he thought Jim wasn’t looking.

When Freddie got up to dance, he only wanted to dance with Jim.

Freddie groaned. “I’m really drunk.” He could barely hold his head up, and the world was starting to spin.

“You know what that means Fred…no nightmares, and we both get some sleep.” Roger pumped his fist onto the air.

Freddie gave Roger a vicious kick in the ribs.

Roger screamed and doubled over, but he didn’t dare to protest. He knew he had said too much.

“Freddie is in the living room with me tonight” stated Jim boldly. It seemed alcohol had a dominating effect on him.

Freddie’s head was off Jim’s shoulder instantly with a wide smile “Is the ban lifted?”

“Ban?” asked Brian before waving his hands in the air “…in fact….forget it, I don’t want to know.”
Freddie tapped Jim’s shoulder and whispered in his ear “Please put me down, I’m gonna be sick.”

Jim slid Freddie carefully down his back, onto his feet.

The couple walked away from the small group for a few minutes while Freddie took in some large gulps of fresh air.

A group of men made their way down the other side of the road. One of them had a football under his arm, and the others were chanting loudly.

Jim pulled Freddie towards him, and pressed his head down on his shoulder, with a hand in his hair.

“Pretend you are a girl” Jim whispered.

Freddie giggled loudly onto his shoulder, doing a very good impression of being a girl, until the men had past.

Jim released him with a laugh himself.

“Do I look like a girl?” laughed Freddie outraged.

“Maybe from the back to a drunken football fan…” Jim ruffled Freddie’s hair “…it’s the hair.” Both of them laughed again.

“Do you feel alright now?” Jim asked.

Freddie nodded, still giggling, and they caught their way up to the group.

“Of course you realise if you were a girl I’d have no interest in you whatsoever” Jim teased. “I love every inch of your body as it is” he said, pressing teasing kisses up Freddie’s neck.

“Mmmmmmm does that mean I get some tonight?” Freddie raised one eyebrow. He looked like he was about to clap his hands.

Jim leaned towards Freddie seductively, brushing his lips against Freddie’s ear. “No” he whispered firmly, catching Freddie in his arms as he started to protest. “One more day – ok?”

“No!” Freddie pouted. “I’m fine now.”

Jim chuckled “…and I don’t believe that you wouldn’t lie to me about that sweetheart.” Jim wrapped his arms around Freddie’s waist trying to capture a kiss.

He leaned up close to Freddie’s ear and whispered “Tomorrow night….night – no sooner – I’ll take you to a different kind of heaven.”

Freddie squirmed in Jim’s arms, attempting to pout, but he couldn’t keep the smile from his lips.

“I’m so glad I’m not a girl. I’m modelling in….” Freddie peered at his watch, but it wouldn’t keep still “…a few hours, can you imagine having to shave everywhere?! Urgh”

“Everywhere?” Jim wiggled his eyebrows.

Freddie clutched his finger and giggled. “At least they know I’m a gorilla, and they live with it.”

“Well I’m glad you are sweetheart, at least I got a hint that you were all grown up when I first met you.” Jim brushed Freddie’s cheek. “Although those eyes look about five years old.”
“Did you think I was younger?” asked Freddie cautiously.

“Yeah” said Jim honestly, nodding. “Then I got a closer look at you in spandex, and everything was in the right proportions.”

Jim honestly thought Freddie would laugh.

“How do you think I was younger?” Freddie asked thoughtfully.

Jim stopped walking, and turned to him. “Freddie what a funny thing to say! No sweetheart, you’d be illegal! I was concerned that you were younger. You probably don’t remember, but I came out and asked you how old you were, because I was worried about pursuing you. You thought I was having a dig at you for snuggling up in your blanket.” Jim tickled him.

“It’s just that some men prefer their partners younger” Freddie stated.

“Yes honey, men that are in prison!”

Jim really wasn’t sure what had prompted the question, but it was a subject that Jim was sensitive about.

He saw how some of the men at Heaven had looked at them this evening.

The age gap was only five years, but Freddie looked much younger than his 21 years, which in turn made Jim look older.

Jim continued “If you weren’t 21, and I made love to you, it would be classed as rape by statute, because you wouldn’t be old enough to make that decision for yourself.”

Jim chuckled “Where did you go to school honey? I think they missed some things out.”

Freddie laughed a little too loudly.

“I’m 22 soon” he said proudly.

“Yes”, said Jim, “and a bet you were a virgin this time last year.”

Everybody laughed.

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Soapy water trickled down Freddie’s face stinging his eyes.

Jim was beginning to wish he had run a bath, instead of trying to shower Freddie - who seemed to be getting drunker as the night progressed.

Jim was struggling to hold him upright, and shampoo his hair.

“Can I go to sleep?” slurred Freddie.

“Not in the shower” Jim chuckled.

“I’m tired though” he protested.
“You’re cute though” Jim mimicked him, feeling as though he was indulging a very small child.

Freddie tipped his head back with an enormous yawn, and swallowed a mouthful of water.

“Take me to bed Mr Hutton” he spluttered.

“Not until you’re clean, and all these suds have gone” Jim laughed, rubbing Freddie’s nose with his.

“You’ll thank me in the morning when you are modelling at the college and you are all fresh.”

“Why aren’t you jealous?” whined Freddie.

Jim smiled. “Of how drunk you are, or of you being a life model? A naked life model?” Jim laughed softly. “Do I have reason to be jealous sweetheart? Is there something I should know about your time at the college?”

Freddie shook his head, pouting.

Jim laughed “Oh, so you just WANT me to be jealous!” Jim paused for effect. “They can look, but if anyone touches you, I’ll have them killed!

That seemed to satisfy Freddie.

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Jim perched Freddie on the side of the bath and wrapped a large fluffy towel around him.

The bathroom was a disaster zone with opened bottles from where Freddie couldn’t decide what fragrance he wanted to smell of. Crumpled towels, and the floor and surfaces were slippery with sudsy water. Brian would have a fit in the morning.

Jim wiped away the last traces of makeup from Freddie’s face, and gently pulled a brush through his wet hair.

He didn’t know when he started to enjoy doing these things for Freddie.

If he had suggested it to any of his ex-boyfriends they would have thought he’d gone mad, but Freddie didn’t seem to mind. He loved to be pampered.

It was as though he wanted Jim instinctively, in the most intimate of ways, but held him at arm’s length in others.

Jim knelt down and brought his face level with Freddie’s. His eyes were barely open.

Jim pressed a sweet kiss to Freddie’s soft lips. “You’re all done. Can I trust you to go to the toilet and brush your teeth, while I nip into your room and get your blanket?”

Freddie shook his head and stretched his arms up around Jim’s neck. “I’m tired.” Jim laughed out loud - as though tiredness was an adequate reason to say no.

Jim pulled Freddie to his feet and lightly slapped his bottom.
“...and to think that you wanted some action tonight. You couldn’t even get it up” Jim laughed.

Freddie smiled conspiratorially “...but you can.”

Jim kissed him gently “no!”

The ticking of the clock was rhythmical and soothing tonight, as were Freddie’s quiet breaths on his chest.

Jim felt like he was under a weighted blanket, with Freddie deciding the most comfortable place to sleep was on top of him.

It was funny, after his disturbed sleep the night before, and a skinful of beer, Jim didn’t feel like sleeping yet.

He wanted this moment to last forever.

Despite being as close as was humanly possible, Jim squeezed Freddie closer.

Is this what it was like to be trusted?

“This is nice” whispered Freddie, making Jim jump despite the quiet sound. He thought Freddie had been sleeping.

Jim rubbed his hands up and down Freddie’s back.

“These are my favourite times Freddie – you, me, and nothing. No pressure, no drama, I just get to hold you.”

“You’ll soon get bored” said Freddie sleepily.

“Of you?” Jim was shocked. “Never…and I mean that. Not only are you lovely, but I’m not that kind of man sweetheart.”

Jim found that surprisingly easy to say, especially considering Freddie was reputed to be something of a player.

“You will, everyone leaves in the end” said Freddie, with no hint of emotion.

“Why sweetheart?” Jim was amused. “Come on, tell me, what is so repulsive about you?” He gave Freddie a teasing tickle.

Freddie was quiet.

“Aaah…..” started Jim. “You’ve stopped talking to me again. Ok, I’ll tell you what I see. I see a man with an amazing sense of spirit and fun. You are brave and fearless, with a touch of fragility that is so endearing. You are beautiful – body and soul – incredibly sexy, and so so cuddly.” Jim squeezed Freddie so tightly that he squeaked. “...and I’m the luckiest man alive” finished Jim.

Freddie laughed tiredly.
“So…are you going to tell me about these nightmares? …and don’t tell me you don’t know what I’m on about because I heard what Roger said” Jim said gently.

“Rodgee has a big mouth!” said Freddie.

“Aaah, he talks.” Jim chuckled, gently pulling Freddie’s head back to steal a kiss. “Are the nightmares the reason you won’t sleep at mine, because if they are, I spent weeks sleeping with you when you weren’t talking, and I know you are a restless sleeper.”

Freddie shrugged “Sort of.”

“It’s not important Freddie, it’s not. We can deal with it together. Are the dreams always the same?”

Freddie nodded.

“What are they about? Can you make sense of them?” Jim inquired.

The moment the words were out of his mouth, he wished he could snatch them back. He felt every inch of Freddie’s body stiffen.

“No…I - I don’t know” Freddie stammered.

Jim ran a soothing hand through Freddie’s hair, and changed the subject slightly.

“When I was about nine, I went through a really bad patch of nightmares. Mum and Dad were exhausted with getting up to me several times in the night. Then when the nightmares stopped, I deliberately cried out….just for a cuddle.” Jim chuckled. “They soon got wise to me though.”

Freddie hugged Jim tighter.

“I bet you had your Mum and Dad wrapped around your little finger didn’t you?” Jim chuckled.

Freddie shook his head tiredly. “I didn’t see them much. I went to school in India, but my family lived in Africa.”

“Yes” said Jim, excited that Freddie was actually talking back to him. “I noticed your Mum’s dress at the concert. It’s was very beautiful. You like to wear bold colours too – I have never asked you before – are you Indian?”

“No….well …..sort of….my family are Parsi, which is an old Persian culture, but Mum and Dad were both raised in India. I was born in Zanzibar, which is in Africa, so I’m a little bit African too.”

Jim was going to get Freddie drunk more often, if it meant he opened up like this – although he was so tired he sounded a little like a windup toy.

“Wow!....I mean wow!” said Jim amazed. “I was born in Carlow, and I was raised in Carlow, and I went to school in Carlow, and London is HUGE!!”

Freddie giggled.

“India and Africa are a long way apart sweetheart, how come you were so far from your family?” asked Jim.

Freddie yawned, and settled back into his comfortable spot. “I was at boarding school.”

Jim couldn’t believe how different Freddie’s life had been from his own. Was it an educational
choice to leave your child in a school so very far away? Or perhaps a cultural one? Jim couldn’t imagine having been so far from home as a child. An uncomfortable feeling settled on his chest.

“Did you like it there? Is it like in the movies? I bet you were so naughty...who looked after you?” Jim chuckled. He was so keen to hear every little detail about Freddie’s life up to the point they had met.

Freddie didn’t respond.

Jim brushed a hand through his hair, and looked down into his face. Freddie’s mouth hung open, and he was snoring quietly. His long eyelashes fanned softly on his pale cheeks, and his fingers were interwoven in the hair on Jim’s chest.

Jim smiled softly and dropped a kiss on Freddie’s forehead.

“I want to make the nightmares better honey, not worse” Jim whispered. “I’ll never ask more than you want to tell me. You are the best thing that ever happened to me. You are precious, and I will be here always. I promise.”

Jim had missed talking to Freddie when he slept. These were the times he didn’t hold anything back.

Jim’s heart hammered nosily in his chest, as he made his way into the back of the room.

He was trying to draw as little attention to himself as possible.

This was about as far from his world as he could ever imagine himself.

He had spent a handful of days at the local college when he was training to be an officer, but nothing like the art world. This was another world entirely.

He propped himself in the corner, and succeeded in not being noticed.

There was the occasional scraping of a chair leg on the floor, the odd cough, and the scratching of charcoal on the page, but otherwise the room was in silence. Funny, Jim had expected there to be sniggering, and giggles behind hands, but the artists were fully absorbed into their task.

The model was lounging along a chaise.

Those that didn’t know him might have accused him of posing. Those that did, knew he carried himself with such dignity and grace, that he was actually relaxing.

Jim raised his eyes slightly, and allowed himself to study the model’s face.

He was beautiful. A true work of art.

Gone were the boyish giggles, and the nerves. Here was a man presenting himself as a blank canvas. Someone that wasn’t thinking about anything, but carried an old soul.
Eyes that had seen so much, but had not allowed life to dim their sparkle.

Here, Freddie was older – not old – but mature, a man of his years and experience.

A man so immersed in his art as was his birth right, that the perfect shapes and lines were presented in his carriage.

How had Jim not seen this side to the man before?

If Jim lived to be a hundred years old, he wouldn’t tire of him.

Jim hadn’t come to disrupt Freddie, or to laugh, or to intrude, he had come to see the man he loved in another genre of his art.

Despite the courage it had taken Jim an hour to work up outside, he had come simply because he was interested.

If he was bolder, he would have weaved between the easels, and looked at how the students viewed his lover.

He bet that none of them saw the beauty he saw.

Freddie shifted in his seat, and Jim could see his skin was bumping slightly. Freddie was cold.

Despite the skimpiness of his stage attire - and his complete lack of attire now - Freddie was always wrapped in something at home. Usually his blanket, or Jim’s arms, but it was never warm enough for him.

As much as he enjoyed seeing the nakedness of his man, he was overwhelmed with the need to wrap him up, rub his skin until he was warm, and he felt annoyed that the teacher had not thought to sufficiently raise the temperature of the room.

Suddenly Freddie’s head shifted, and his focus was just above Jim’s own head. There was a clock on the wall. Just a couple of minutes to go.

Then Freddie saw him.

Jim’s heart stopped. He hadn’t wanted to be seen. He was going to wait outside while Freddie got dressed, and surprise him.

Warmth flooded into Freddie’s eyes, and an amused smile played around his lips.

There he was. The man he loved, and suddenly recognised as himself. Jim couldn’t help but smile back.

In one fluid movement Freddie reached out an arm and wrapped a robe around himself, rising from the chaise. The students looked at each other, not sure what was happening.

Freddie had a quiet word with the teacher, then he was coming over.

Jim hoped Freddie wasn’t cross.

Freddie hugged Jim warmly, and gave him a chaste kiss on the cheek, but the passion was in his eyes.

They had to behave here. Pretend to be friends, or colleagues, but never lovers.
Freddie laughed out loud “So, you are jealous after all?”

Freddie seemed so tickled with the idea, that Jim let him have it. “Of course I was jealous” he lied “….and I was missing you.” There was the truth.

It was hard not to kiss him.

“Is the teacher cross with you for packing up early?” asked Jim.

Freddie leaned in close and whispered “As soon as I saw you, I thought about the first time we made love, and I thought shit, what if I got a hard on” Freddie giggled.

Jim found it almost impossible not to touch him. His giggles were so endearing.

“You look amazing Freddie” Jim said quietly. “Not a trace of a hangover.”

Freddie squeezed his hand discreetly. “Thank you so much for looking after me last night darling.”

“The pleasure was all mine sweetheart” Jim reassured him…and it was.

“I mean it Jim. You can’t. You can’t touch me. You can’t look at me. You can’t refer to our times together. OK? You’re somebody I work with. I’m so sorry darling, from the bottom of my heart, I’m truly sorry, but they need to believe I have a girlfriend. It’s just the way it has to be.”

Freddie’s eyes were enormous, as he begged with Jim for understanding.

“Everything about this scares me, but you’re here now, and they are outside, and they’ll love you, but they can never love you, not in the way I want them to. Please Jim.”

Jim reached out to squeeze Freddie’s hand, but he jumped on contact, and Jim recognised his obvious mistake.

Jim raised his hands in apology.

“I do understand Freddie. I hate it, but I understand. I have been in this position before you know, and the boys have explained about your family’s religion….” Freddie cast Jim a dirty look.

“The boys talk too much about what they don’t understand” snapped Freddie.

“They didn’t mean any harm Freddie. Now try to relax or your family will know something is wrong. I promise, you can trust me.”

Freddie rolled his eyes. If only Jim knew of the last time he had heard that….if only Jim knew of the consequences.
Jim poured the tea.

His hand shook slightly, and he had hoped that the lid wouldn’t plop off the pot unceremoniously, or that tea wouldn’t dribble out onto the table, or into the saucer.

Tea was Freddie’s forte. He had a smaller, steadier hand. Jim felt he would have been better placed layering cement with a trowel.

Despite his nervousness, Jim could see that Freddie was amused.

“Please excuse Jim, he’s usually so much better with his hands” crooned Freddie. “He’s more used to pulling beers than pouring tea.”

Kashmira giggled “Where do you work Jim?”

Jim wasn’t sure what the answer should be, so he opted for the truth. “I work at The Market Tavern bar. I prefer to serve the customers, but I also do security services for the busy nights, and when we have the musicians in...which is how I know Freddie.”

“Jim was training to be a police officer in Ireland Mama” said Freddie proudly.

Jer looked impressed. “Is that a difficult profession to get into here in London Jim? I’m sure it’s a worthy one.”

“To be honest, I haven’t followed it up here in London. I’ve been here a little over five years, so I suppose I should make the decision shortly” Jim said politely.

“Jim’s been here longer than us then Freddie. Did Freddie tell you that we moved to London from Zanzibar when he was 18? It’s so cold here, I still haven’t got used to it. There was unrest in our country, we had to leave with what we could carry. We left most of our possessions behind, and our wonderful friends.”

Jim looked at Freddie with concern. His mind flashed back to a conversation he’d had with Freddie some time ago about leaving the family’s servants behind.

There were some conversations that Jim had with Freddie in the past that were so obscure to him, so spectacular, that Jim wondered if he was hearing correctly.

Not that he ever doubted Freddie’s honesty or sincerity, but the tales were set in lands so far flung from the life Jim knew, as to be enchanting….whimsical almost.

“No, Mrs Mercury…” It took all Jim had not to grab Freddie’s hand. To show Freddie he was here, and felt his pain. “….Freddie never mentioned that.”

Jer and Kashmira burst into laughter.

Jer patted Jim’s hand “My husband’s name is Bulsara. I’m not Mercury.”

Kashmira was still giggling, but she dropped her eyes when she noticed Jim was watching her. She was so like Freddie.

“Mercury is a little too close to the sun for my liking” Jer wiped her eyes on her napkin.

Everyone laughed, except Freddie.
“Freddie is very buttoned up I’m afraid…like his father” Jer smiled.

“I am nothing like him!” spat Freddie angrily.

Jer smiled. “Boys and their Father’s. How about you Jim? Do you have a good relationship with your Father?”

Jim shook his head gravely. “I’m afraid not. Dad never understood my reasons for leaving Ireland. He always hoped I would return, and have a family there, but you have to go where the work is don’t you? I grew up in a beautiful village with a large family, but my life didn’t quite work out that way.”

It was Freddie’s turn to look at Jim sadly. So many broken dreams, so much pain, all because their love of men couldn’t be accepted.

Jim decided to lighten the mood.

“Freddie tells me he went to school in India. I must admit, I noticed the beautiful fabric of your traditional dress at the concert the other night.” Jim smiled and turned to Freddie. “The colours are just like your blanket.”

For a second, Jim’s heart stopped – should he know about the blanket?

Jer was astounded. She turned to Freddie open mouthed. “Have you still got that old thing?”

“I love it Mama, it’s my favourite thing ever. It’s such good quality, why would I ever get rid of it?” Freddie said fondly.

Jer turned to Jim. “I sent that to Freddie when he was at boarding school…..gosh …I can’t remember when…he was just a boy. It was in his nursery when he lived in Zanzibar with us. I found it one day, I washed it and pressed it with our national flowers to give it the fragrance of home. Sent it to Freddie in the post. It probably took months to arrive. I’m so glad it is well loved.” Tears were welling in her eyes.

Freddie got up and gave his Mum a hug. Jim’s heart warmed to see them so close. To know that Freddie had a loving family.

“Yes, Freddie is always saying he’s cold – like you – he’s always composing with the blanket tucked around himself.” Jim qualified his knowledge of the blanket quickly.

“Would anyone like anymore tea?” asked Jim picking up the pot.

Freddie sat back in his chair, and gazed at this amazing man who was fitting right in with his family – from another culture, and another time, and he felt the two extreme ends of his life move a little closer together.

Jim pushed Freddie into the tiled wall, he licked and nipped into the soft skin of his neck. Freddie let out little gasps of pleasure, bracing himself against the wall with his palms flat on the tiles.

Holding him firmly, Jim worked little kisses down Freddie’s back, nipping hungrily, making
Freddie’s skin goose bump.

The few days break from taking Freddie had made Jim need him more, and he was in the mood for quick.

Jim dropped to his knees, the hot water pouring over himself and Freddie, adding to the steam evaporating from their bodies.

Jim wrapped his hands around Freddie’s thighs, running his fingers over the soft skin of his inner thigh. Freddie gasped in anticipation. Jim sunk his teeth into the flesh of Freddie’s buttocks nipping softly, leaving hot little marks that he would kiss better later.

He flicked his tongue over the entrance waiting for Freddie’s reaction, which was not long in coming.

Encouraged, Jim pushed his tongue inside. Freddie groaned in pleasure. Jim continued to thrust his tongue in harder, exploring, enjoying the little pants and trembles he could feel all the more readily.

There was no sign of pain, or resistance. Freddie looked over his shoulder at Jim, his eyes dark, and completely helpless. Jim felt a little sorry for him….for a whole second.

Freddie had done his time.

Jim stood slowly, brushing every part of his body against Freddie. Pushing his erection hard against Freddie’s body. Letting him know that it wasn’t just Freddie that had struggled with the break from this pleasure.

He would go easy on him….for now.

Jim poured lube over his right hand, then rubbing his hands together he smoothed a hand over the curve of Freddie’s buttock, and began to work him open just the quick side of comfortable. He hooked his fingers massaging at that little sweet spot that had Freddie whimpering.

Giving him no respite, he reached around and wrapped a slick hand around his cock. Stroking a couple of times before wrapping his thumb over the head, rubbing gently at the tip, all the while massaging with his other hand.

Freddie caught fire quickly. Thrusting his hips violently between the two pleasures, not finding a break from the white hot heat in any direction.

Jim stroked hard and fast, stopping abruptly when with a shout Freddie shot white streaks up the tiles.

He knew it would be quick.

Jim wrapped a strong arm around Freddie’s waist as his knees gave out.

He turned with Freddie, tucked against his body, sitting down in the bath with Freddie between his legs, pulling him back to rest against his chest under the hot running water.

Freddie laid his head back on Jim’s shoulder, as Jim lathered up the soap between his hands and slowly washed Freddie, rubbing lazy circles over his skin with the soap.

They lie like this for some time when there was a furious knock on the bathroom door.

“Can I come in?” it was Roger…again. At least he had knocked this time.
“I’ll left my wallet in there, and I’m going out now!”

Jim raised his eyes. Yes. Roger was correct, his wallet was on the sink.

“Please!” Roger was knocking more insistently.

“Just a minute!” yelled Jim, frustrated by the interruption yet again.

Freddie slowly tried to move

“You stay there little darling.” Jim whispered “I’m going to cover you over alright?” Freddie nodded.

Jim reached up a long arm and switched off the shower. He then pulled a towel over their laps to conceal their modesty.

“Alright Rog, you can come in” Jim yelled.

Roger pushed the door open with one hand over his eyes. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”

Freddie giggled.

“It’s OK. You can look, we’re covered” Jim said with a laugh.

Roger exhaled loudly “Phew.” He spotted his wallet “There it is.”

He turned to face Freddie and Jim. Freddie continued to rest against Jim’s shoulder, his eyes closed.

“Fred? You ok?” asked Roger with concern.

Jim chuckled. “He’s fine. He’s just resting.”

“In the shower?” Roger raised an amused eyebrow.

Freddie opened one eye “I’ve just had a right good fuck Roger, now piss off” he said sweetly.

“Ewww ewww too much information!” yelled Roger “I’m going. I trust you’re coming out - when you can …..stand?”

Freddie nodded “Mmmmm.”

Roger turned to leave then muttered “Maybe I will try a man after all if it’s so good you need a fucking siesta.”

Jim and Freddie laughed out loud.

The moment the bathroom door shut behind Roger, Jim sunk his teeth into the tender skin at Freddie’s neck.

“Do you know how much I’ve wanted you today?” he growled. “All the time we were in public… at the college, at afternoon tea, all the time I couldn’t touch you just made me want you more. Made me think about how you feel when you come on my cock.”

Freddie groaned loudly.

It was a relief to know that Jim needed him just as much as Freddie needed Jim. That Jim could match his appetite. and give him exactly what he needed.
Jim pushed Freddie up from off his chest, and grabbed the lube.

“Think you can take me like this?” Jim growled into Freddie’s ear, pulling him into his lap.

Freddie was ready just at the sound of Jim’s need. He turned to Jim, pulling him into a passionate kiss, one hand out for the lube. “Allow me darling.”

Freddie poured the lube into his hand, and without wasting a moment took Jim’s cock in his slick hand and started to stroke.

Jim groaned, and put a hand to Freddie’s “Stop, I’m so ready for this, I’ve wanted you for so long.”

Freddie leant up onto his knees, preparing to sit back onto his cock.....

“Freddie, Jim, get down here right now, and be dressed!” screamed Brian excitedly from the foot of the stairs.

They both groaned loudly.

Jim pulled Freddie into his arms, and kissed the top of his head.

“I want you so bad” Jim whispered softly, so disappointed.

“This better be fucking good!” Freddie screamed.

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“So….when do we go?” asked Deaky looking a little faint.

“End of the week – four, five days at the most. The tour is for six weeks. I told you to be prepared” said John.

“I can’t believe it, your dreams are coming true, I can’t believe it” Jim kept repeating, holding Freddie tighter.

“Didn’t that opportunity pass months ago?” said Brian.

“Well, I thought you’d be a little more enthusiastic” John laughed.

“My God! We totally are” shrieked Roger. “We just …..thought …..we’d only get the one chance, and …we blew it!”

“I guess lightening can strike twice boys. It seems the tour never went ahead. Mott the Hoople had countless problems getting their ducks in a row, the support band – who they didn’t want in the first place – have split up. EMI only wanted Queen anyway” laughed John. “Freddie, where are you at?”

“Born ready darling….born ready” he purred, snuggling closer to Jim.

John clapped his hands, jumping up from his seat.

“Right, the cogs are turning. I’ll confirm your acceptance to EMI, sort your travel
plans…..Queen…..you are off to tour America ….
Encounters: The Rules

Chapter Summary

As the start of Queen’s tour approaches, Jim pulls out all the stops to make sure Freddie won’t forget him while he’s away.

Chapter Notes

I can’t believe I got to chapter 48 before having a crisis of confidence lovies! I’ve been faffing with this all day. Do let me know what you think 😊

It was official - Freddie could not get enough sex.

Jim had never been happier to oblige, or more up for anything in his life.

The smile across his face had never been wider, as he pegged down the ground sheet for the tent he was erecting in the garden of the royal household.

He’d had the idea earlier, in the store room at The Market Tavern, where he and Freddie had been gathering cymbals, guitar cases, manuscripts and drumsticks, which had accumulated over the last few months of the band using the room as their personal studio.

He had turned around to see Freddie bending over the piano, and the feeling was instant - and mutual - if the tent that was being erected in Freddie’s velvet pants was anything to go by.

Freddie had been very nervous about getting close to Jim in public since his encounter with the journalist the previous weekend.

He had been deeply embarrassed, and terrified at the thought of his family finding out that he was gay.

Jim had been sensitive, but Freddie’s fears were much deeper rooted than anything Jim had experienced himself.

Jim had gently explained that he couldn’t see how Freddie could ever hope to be truly happy and contented, if he never had that conversation with his family.

Beat the journalists to the punch.

Jim had even offered to be with him when he told them.

Freddie neatly sidestepped Jim’s line of inquiry, and had vowed to be more careful – that was until he was struck with need in the store room at the Market Tavern.

Jim still didn’t know what came over himself in these situations. He had never had sex in public before he met Freddie.
Two strides, and he had been across the room, taking Freddie into his arms. Minutes later Freddie was over the piano with his trousers bunched around his ankles.

It was disrespectful.

Jim had wanted to show Freddie a more considered, tender side to love.

As was almost guaranteed, Deaky had wandered in just as Freddie was in the throes of a very loud and powerful orgasm. Deaky had declared to the band that he would never recover, and would need to visit the opticians to check for damage to his eyes, and also the hardware store for some bleach powerful enough to erase the image from his brain.

The boys had all expressed their relief at seeing Freddie so happy, and they all really liked Jim, but each of them had caught Jim and Freddie in various embarrassing positions.

It was awkward.

If Freddie didn’t want to sleep at Jim’s house, and Jim didn’t want to take Freddie away from the band mates he needed to be close to, now more than ever, a pop up space that was just theirs seemed the obvious – if rather juvenile - solution.

Besides, it was for tonight only.

Jim wouldn’t allow himself to think about the couple of days he had left with Freddie. He had told himself he would grieve after he had waved the band off at the airport.

Jim didn’t want to be realistic. He wanted to be optimistic.

He wanted to believe that Freddie would return from touring America, and life would go on in the comparative bliss that had been the last couple of weeks.

Realism was for afterwards.

When he was alone in his flat, hearing the strains of a roaring crowd that had once been part of his life, waiting for the phone call that would never come. If it did, it would be Brian checking in. Brian would make a different excuse for Freddie’s absence every time.

No. Jim wouldn’t think about it.

He would think about this evening.

Tonight was the night – date night!

Brian had booked them all into Rules in Covent Garden for dinner. The oldest restaurant in London.

Brian had assured Jim that Freddie would be too caught up in the décor and the artwork to feel nervous. The food looked good, and they would have a fun, relaxed time. Something nice for everyone before they jetted off.

Afterwards – when he had plied Freddie with a little too much drink - Jim would introduce him to the idea of spending the night in the tent.

Deaky had said that Jim was crazy, that Freddie would take one look, and run back indoors.

There were times when Jim thought Jim was crazy, but if he hadn’t taken the chance, made some crazy bold decisions, Freddie wouldn’t be in his life at all.
It had been a while since Jim had camped, he sincerely doubted that Freddie had ever camped in his life, unless he did so at boarding school.

This was going to be the camping experience of his life….on the one condition that Freddie agreed to do it in the first place.

Jim had kept some of his money back from the date to spend on luxurious bedding for the tent.

Teddy bear fleeces, goose down duvets, silk cuddle cushions, deep mattresses and pillows, and hot water bottles.

All designed to make Freddie forget that he was outdoors.

Solar powered fairy lights – which Jim really hoped would actually work, as the technology was not quite there yet.

Despite the motivation, tonight wasn’t just about sex, tonight Jim would tell Freddie that he loved him.

He would leave the kind of impression on Freddie that men like Jim simply didn’t leave.

Something that Jim hoped Freddie would want to come home for.

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One bathroom simply wasn’t enough.

Jim had gone home to get ready after Freddie had freaked out at him, saying Jim couldn’t see him while he was getting ready.

Deaky had reminded Freddie that they were going out for dinner, not getting married.

Jim had taken advantage of his time in exile to get his haircut, after insisting that the boys absolutely did not let Freddie into the garden.

Roger had gone missing altogether.

Brian was concerned about the prospect of his girlfriend, and his best friends being in proximity for a whole evening.

Deaky had repeatedly reminded Brian that this was HIS harebrained scheme, and was so nervous he thought he might lapse into one of Freddie’s mute spells.

The boys all too aware that this would be their last fun night with the person they loved for some time.
Brian had been right about Rules, the artwork had indeed captured Freddie’s attention immediately.

Either that, or he was using his rapture as a way of avoiding making conversation with the uniformed host, who was trying to take his coat.

Jim was very nervous, as he realised on the way that he hadn’t really thought this date idea through.

He wanted everything to be perfect for Freddie, but he hadn’t taken on board just how apprehensive Freddie would be, or the fact that Jim couldn’t publicly console him.

“We can’t go in until Roger gets here” Freddie had pleaded on the restaurant steps.

In truth, Jim was breath taken at how Freddie looked this evening.

He had managed to take his stage androgyny and work it into a very classy ensemble worthy of London’s oldest restaurant.

It should have been shirt and tie – but not for Freddie. He was wearing tight fitting black jeans with platform boots, a low buttoned black shirt with braces, with a candy striped jacket. The whole outfit worked very well. He looked well heeled, but also the height of fashion, without compromising his voice.

Jim wanted to eat him.

Completely unable to touch him in this environment, Jim had to settle for watching his lover be consumed by nerves from the distance of less than an arm’s length.

Freddie fidgeted with his clothes, kept his head lowered, and viewed the world through giant nervous eyes, and thick glossy hair.

He may have been trying to hide, but Freddie turned the heads of complete strangers.

Jim found Freddie’s comfort level very difficult to deal with, he never knew which Freddie he would get.

The performer who would dazzle everyone with the power of his voice, the warmth of his character, and a brazen sexuality that dazed men and women alike.

The artist – the cool sophisticate who knew what to wear, where a particular piece of furniture was best situated, or how to critique a new piece of artwork.

The honeypot – tempting his men to do wicked deeds in public places.

Then there was this Freddie ….his man, his lover, who he couldn’t even offer a hand of support to when he was uneasy in a place where the night was supposed to be his.

“Roger knows the time Fred, he knew we were all meeting here, we can’t wait forever, come on” demanded Brian, with a show of his old managerial bossiness.

Jim just hoped the media wouldn’t show up.

Brian climbed the stairs and announced the arrival of their party to the host.

Jim couldn’t help a discreet hand on Freddie’s back to usher him ahead on the stairs, the hand may have also lingered on a hip for a second longer than acceptable.
As soon as they were in their seats, Jim summoned a waiter.

He ordered the cocktail of the day for the ladies, who were served with a mix of honey vodka, sweet bubble gum mixers and popping candy around the rim.

Jim accidentally order too many, and pushed one along to Freddie, who was seated beside him, but may as well have been at the other end of the table. Moments later, Jim pushed a second drink Freddie’s way, as Veronica said she didn’t fancy drinking alcoholic drinks this evening, and would be happier with a lemonade.

Freddie grinned from ear to ear and mouthed “thank you” to his lover.

Suddenly an attractive man in a powder blue suit approached the table. His blonde hair was swept back into a neat pony tail, and his black dress shoes gleamed.

“My God Roger!” Freddie shrieked. “Is that you in there?”

With a sweep of his arm, Roger ushered a very attractive brunette lady to the table.

“Everybody this is Dominique, Dominique …everybody.”

No one could quite believe it that was their footloose and fancy free drummer in there, and a series of whistles and shrieks followed. Thankfully Dominique had a great sense of humour.

As it was too awkward to sit in couples, the group arranged themselves around the table for eight in a haphazard fashion, and soon found themselves relaxing into the environment.

Roger nudged Brian’s arm, just as he brought a forkful of peas to his mouth. Brian tried to poke a chip in Roger’s ear in retaliation.

Although Freddie was far too proper to behave like that in such a fine establishment, he could barely contain his giggles.

Jim had been wrong to try and push Freddie into going on this date with him alone.

Freddie wasn’t ready yet – not as a gay man - but as a shy young man. Here with his friends, Freddie was comfortable and happy, and that was all Jim had wished for.

Freddie would become an international rock star.

He would grow, and mature, and harden. That’s how the world works.

He would eat at the finest restaurants that money can buy. He would work and holiday in exotic locations. He would look amazing in the finest tailored suits.

He would expand on this little family of friends, he would meet new people, and make new friends of his own.

He would encounter unscrupulous people who would try to use him, but unlike now, he wouldn’t be floored by them, he would know exactly where to go for help.
For now Jim had this Freddie.

The Freddie that needed to blend into his pack.

The one that would poke his fingers through Jim’s belt loop when he wasn’t sure about a situation.

The Freddie who would gaze at him – like he was doing now - with those soft brown eyes that expressed so much trust, that Jim worry he could never be enough.

Jim hoped that he would be beside Freddie as all those things happened, but for now he was the luckiest man alive. He had this Freddie.

He felt cool fingers squeeze his beneath the table. Jim turned to him.

“Are you enjoying your evening?” Freddie whispered.

“I’m having the time of my life darling. Thank you” replied Jim.

It wasn’t enough. He wanted to pull him into an embrace and kiss him softly, but he couldn’t do that here, and Jim hoped Freddie could see how much he loved him despite their inability to touch.

Jim looked down at Freddie’s plate, he hadn’t eaten a tenth of the food that was on it.

Looking around him to see who was watching, Jim picked up a chip and discreetly put it to Freddie’s lips. Freddie smiled, and took the chip. Jim waited a few moments, and then put a small spoonful of rice from his own plate to Freddie’s lips.

Carefully he ran his spare hand along the seat and squeezed Freddie’s hip.

His plate would be empty by the time Jim had finished showing his affection.

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“I’m got a little surprise for you Freddie. If you don’t like it, you just have to say, but I’m hoping you will think it fun” Jim said with a cautious tone, which caused Freddie’s heart to beat faster with trepidation.

Freddie didn’t like Jim to sound unsure. He himself was always unsure. He liked when Jim was certain.

Freddie put one foot over the door step with some misgivings. He couldn’t quite bring himself to put his other foot over the step in case he needed to run back inside.

It was dark, what could he possibly see out here?

Jim chuckled “Come on” he said, holding a large hand towards him to coax Freddie out.

Freddie felt his chest flood with the warmth of excitement when he saw the pretty twinkling lights over the domed structure.

Freddie squealed and clapped his hands together, reflecting the fairy lights in his glossy excited eyes.
“I thought you said it was a tent, not a palace!” Roger exclaimed.

“Well…it’s a tent, but it’s a four man tent, made larger by the central communal living area. I don’t want Freddie to feel claustrophobic” Jim explained pulling Freddie against his hip, and kissing his temple.

“I always need the toilet when there isn’t one” Freddie laughed nervously, making a joke but knowing he would be awake most of the night worrying about the lack of a bathroom.

“You’re not a prisoner sweetheart, you can go into the house whenever you want to. I’ve made it all cosy inside for you, but if you don’t like it, I won’t be mad” Jim reassured him.

“Can I see inside please?” Freddie asked cautiously. “Are there spiders?” he said, jumping back as though he had just spotted an enormous one.

Jim chuckled. “If there are spiders Freddie, I promise to be your hero. But no, sweetheart, this is a spider proof zone.”

Jim unzipped the tent, and encouraged Freddie to peer inside.

Freddie was unsure about how he was expected to act.

He felt excited, and nervous all at the same time.

No one had ever done anything like this for him before. He wasn’t sure if it was a trick. Suddenly he felt very nervous of what might be expected of him this evening.

Freddie poked his head inside, and gasped at the cosy retreat that had been created.

It looked more like something Freddie would have decorated himself, rather than his lover.

There were sumptuous fabrics. Silk cushions, and faux animal throws.

Forgetting himself for a moment, Freddie crawled inside and flopping onto his stomach, rubbed his face against the soft velvety texture. He was surprised to feel deep, plush comfort beneath his body. Nothing of the hard, cold floor he had been expecting. He flipped onto his back, and met Jim’s gaze as he hovered in the doorway.

Embarrassingly he felt tears prickle behind his eyes.

“Did you do this for me?” he asked softly.

“Yes, darling. Somewhere for us to be comfortable for tonight, together, where we don’t have to squish up on the sofa. We can stretch out in here. Your blanket is under the top layer warming on the hot water bottle, so don’t bounce on that bit” Jim said happily. So relieved by Freddie’s reaction.

Freddie met Jim’s eyes cautiously. He thought he might like it after all.

“Thank you darling” he said softly with a sincere smile. “I don’t know how to thank you enough. You have thought of everything.”

******************************************************************************
Freddie perched on an old tree stump.

The silence echoed in the darkness. He waited, but he couldn’t hear anything.

A slight breeze caused a handful of leaves to rustle, and Freddie wasn’t sure if he felt comforted that there was something around besides him, or threatened.

He started to count the seconds, when something made him look up.

The sky was brilliant with twinkling white stars. He had not seen so many since he was a little boy, and he would lie on the beach with Kashmira, scanning the sky for astronaut activity.

Freddie was relieved when he heard Jim return outside after taking his spot in the bathroom for the evening.

“This is more Brian’s thing than mine…” he said quietly with a gentle smile “…but they really are pretty tonight.”

Jim looked at Freddie’s face in profile. His view was better than any stellar arrangement.

Aware of eyes burning into his cheekbone, Freddie turned to Jim “Sorry, are you keen to get me into the sack” he said laughing.

Freddie felt warm strong arms around his waist, and he relaxed back against Jim’s chest.

“I was just thinking how very beautiful you are” said Jim, popping his chin on top of Freddie’s head.

Freddie felt everything stop for a second – his thoughts, his heartbeat.

No one could actually look at his harsh angular features, enormous teeth, and bug eyes, and see beauty – could they?

Freddie rolled his eyes. Of course they couldn’t. Jim was trying to get him into bed.

Didn’t he know by now that Freddie was a sure thing? That he couldn’t resist the feelings sex gave him.

Jim only had to ask.

Jim tickled him softly “I can feel you blushing.”

Freddie giggled.

“We have all the time in the world sweetheart. You’re not performing tonight, we can just …be” said Jim.

Performing? Thought Freddie. What did the show have to do with this evening?

“If you would like a little time out here amongst the stars, we can just enjoy that together” Jim continued, kissing Freddie’s cheek. “I’ve got hot chocolate warming on the stove. Would you like a cup before we get cosy?”

Freddie nodded, hoping he wouldn’t need the toilet again too quickly after he’d drank it, but that did actually sound very nice.

Jim rubbed his back. “Why don’t you keep yourself warm in the tent while I fetch it, then your
blanket should be nice and toasty to wrap around you while we drink the chocolate?”

Freddie poked a finger through Jim’s belt loop as he turned to go back inside.

“Is it ok if I come with you?” he asked timidly.

Jim wrapped an arm around his shoulders. “Scared those spiders will pounce the minute I turn my back?” Jim chuckled.

Freddie was more afraid of the silence in the darkness.

Freddie leaned against the tree. His warm blanket was wrapped around his legs, and his hands wrapped around a cup of cocoa.

He was warm and cosy, but there was something weighing on his mind. Something the voice in his head was pestering him to ask.

“Jim…?”

Jim smiled. He did love sentences that began with his name.

“…why do you do such nice things for me?” he asked quietly.

Jim chuckled “What do you mean honey?” he asked, but Freddie could sense something deeper. That perhaps Jim was wrapping curiosity in humour, as though he thought Freddie would be scared away by the questions in his eyes.

“I mean… the tent, and the lovely meal, and the cocktails, and the…..” he gestured with his cup “…hot chocolate….you know I’m a sure thing right? I…I mean, am I not good for you?”

Jim’s eyes were on stalks. His jaw dropped. Freddie sensed a little anger, and he sharply regretted his words.

He couldn’t bear to look at Jim’s face for another second.

Jim carefully put his cup down on the ground, and leaned over to grasp Freddie’s hands in his own.

“Freddie, do you think I do these things just for sex?” his voice came out a little harsher than he intended, and Freddie recoiled.

Jim dropped softly onto his knees in front of Freddie.

“Oh darling” Jim clutched Freddie’s hands around the hot cup, a little too tightly, and tried to catch his eye. “You are absolutely perfect for me, why wouldn’t I want to spoil you? I…I… I feel fantastic, when I’m with you. It’s a strange quirk of MY character, that when you allow me to take care of you, you make me feel a million dollars.”

Freddie laughed, a little confused. “So ….kind of like a weird bartering system? So, I feel good when we have sex, and you do nice things for me afterwards, which makes you feel good too?” Freddie was overcome by giggles at the absurdity of the human psyche, but Jim was far from
amused.

“My God Freddie! You are worrying me honey. Why do you think you need to buy my affection with your body?” He took a calming breath before continuing. “Freddie, I think, maybe sometime in your life maybe a boyfriend or two have used your generous spirit all for their own gain. I don’t expect anything from you…except the truth. I love what we have together. I love….making love to you, but I don’t ever expect that. If we spent the whole evening just talking, and holding hands, and holding each other, that would be enough sweetheart, because I love…your company.” Jim leaned towards Freddie and ran his hands up his thighs to his hips attempting to shuffle him awkwardly into his arms, despite the angle of the tree stump.

“It’s alright to treat yourself more gently honey, you aren’t expected to perform with me. You can just….be you.”

Jim pulled Freddie a little closer to him too quickly, and they overbalanced, hurtling towards the ground, hot chocolate spilling everywhere.

Freddie squealed with laughter as he landed on his back on the cool grass. Jim fell on top of him.

“Mmmmm…but now we are here…” said Jim, capturing Freddie’s bottom lip gently between his teeth “….this is a nice position.”

Jim proceeded to kiss Freddie out of his clothing, from the warmth of the tent.

He started at his neck, kissing down his arms as he slowly removed his jacket. Freddie giggled with delight, taking in the pretty fairy lights, and how soft the throw felt on his cheek.

He was growing more comfortable with this sensation with every day that passed.

The warmth that radiated down his body with every kiss and every touch.

It was similar to how he had always felt when a large pair of hands pushed him up on a wall, or a strong arm around him forced him to receive what was coming his way.

This was a little different though. Jim took his time. The urgency wasn’t there, but somehow it wasn’t any less exciting. If anything, the anticipation of how he would feel was more exciting, without the bursts of fear.

The tinged edges of fear were that in a couple of days, Freddie would be in America, and he wouldn’t feel this anymore.

“I’m leaving the braces on” joked Jim, bringing Freddie back down to earth for a second “These are very sexy” he said following them down, “now, where do they lead to?”

Freddie couldn’t help giggling some more, as Jim tickled his stomach with the backs of his knuckles as he traced the braces down.

“Are we leaving my platform boots on?” Freddie asked laughing out loud now.

Jim shook his head with a soft smile, kissing his lips before turning around to head down to Freddie’s
feet to remove the boots.

Freddie grinned mischievously. Jim had played straight into his hands.

Freddie took his opportunity, unbuckling Jim’s belt, and deftly unzipping his trousers and pulling them, and his boxers down over his hips in one fluid move. He was clearly very well practiced at this.

Before Jim knew what had happened, he felt himself engulfed in warm wetness, and whined loudly as the sensation caused his arms to give way, as he was attempting to remove Freddie’s boots.

Freddie didn’t deliberate, he took Jim deep into his mouth, suckling firmly, and running his tongue just under the head.

Experience told him that Jim would be putty in his hands in a matter of minutes.

This time he was wrong.

He felt his own hard cock released from the restrain of his trousers, and whimpered when he felt warm lips creating sensations in his own body.

The game was on.

Both men trying to give the other more pleasure, both trying to get the upper hand, both willing the other to lose concentration, and just enjoy.

Freddie knew he would win this one, as he employed one trick after another to bring Jim quickly to orgasm.

He knew how to do this.

For years, he had done this to men. Tended to their needs first. Knocking the aggression out of their approach with a well-placed tongue.

He heard a click, and the next moment something was moving gently inside him. He felt only pleasure as the waves intensified on both the inside, and the outside of his body in harmony.

Maybe he could just let go. Maybe Jim wouldn’t be angry if he did put his needs aside just for now.

Jim had never been aggressive during sex; hot and steamy, and very raunchy, but always very gentle.

Freddie felt a very slight stretch of his body as the pleasure increased in waves. The sensation complimented that of Jim’s mouth. Freddie moaned loudly as he lost control of the movement of his hips.

“You feel so good” he whispered between pants. “So good..” his words were lost on a loud moan.

He couldn’t have continued his actions if he tried.

Every muscle in his body relaxing and contracting in turn. Freddie was feeling weak and helpless, and consumed entirely by building heat in his stomach.

It was all he could feel.

He could do no more, as the sensations reached a peak.
He felt his body tense seconds before he was shouting out. He knew he was loud, but he didn’t care.

He wanted to tell everyone how good he was feeling, but most of all he wanted to show Jim.

Jim crawled up Freddie’s sensitive body looking very pleased with himself.

He pressed his lips firmly to Freddie’s. “Gotcha” he said with no malice.

The pleasure was all his.

Freddie felt himself rolled onto his side, as Jim wrapped strong arms around his waist, and tender little nips to his neck. He felt teasing fingers running lightly up and down his stomach, making him cry out with the aftershocks.

Jim chuckled. He shook the lube bottle in front of Freddie’s face who tried to grab it without success.

“My secret weapon” he growled in Freddie’s ear.

Freddie watched helplessly as Jim poured some more of the lube onto his hand.

Freddie felt a hand stroke over his hip, then Jim was inside him once more, causing his back to arch with the sensitivity of his last orgasm.

“You’re too sensitive little darling” Jim whispered. “Time for sleep now, and when you wake up, we’ll do it all over again.”

A kiss to his cheek was the last thing Freddie felt.

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He was awoken perhaps more by the change in atmosphere in the tent, than by any sound to begin with.

The chilling sounds came after he had shot upright, every sense on red alert.

Freddie’s wide and terrified eyes were staring at the fairy lights, eyes jolting from one to the next to the next. His heels were attempting to dig into the soft furry fabric of the faux animal throw, as though desperately trying to escape from something ahead of him. His breathing came in short painful gasps, like a person at the end of a very long and frantic sprint.

“No, no, stop, don’t….” he cried. Probably sounding much louder in his own head than he did to Jim’s ear.

Jim closed the space between them in seconds, wrapping his arms around Freddie, pulling his head against his chest, a position that Freddie always chose when cuddling together on the sofa.

Jim attempted to rock him, but instead found himself coming under assault.

Arms, not quite strong enough pummeling at his chest, knees coming up to his stomach to help the arms.

Jim quickly realised that right now Freddie was feeling restrained, instead of consoled.
Against every instinct, Jim forced himself to back away, keeping contact only with a hand woven into Freddie’s hair. Ironically at that moment Freddie reached out for him.

“Freddie….Freddie darling, you’re having a nightmare. You’re ok, you’re in the tent in your own garden. It’s Jim honey, you’re safe at home” he whispered, trying to reach the wakeful, rational Freddie.

Jim had been wrong to tell Freddie yesterday that the nightmares were not important, these were very important, and they weren’t nightmares. Freddie was fighting for life in his own bed.

Dark, frightened eyes locked with his concerned ones. Hands reached out to him. Freddie was back, and it was Jim he needed.

Jim crawled over to be beside him, mindful of not restraining him.

With a million questions in his tormented mind, Jim stroked a gentle hand down Freddie’s cheek, wiping away a tear, he brought his lips softly to Freddie’s.

Jim held him close, rocking him, until the sniffing subsided, and his need for air outweighed that of his need for comfort.

Freddie pushed himself up onto his elbow, then swung his leg over Jim until he was sitting astride him.

Freddie’s hands were in Jim’s hair tugging lightly.

His lips came down to meet Jim’s – soft but hungry, tender but searching.

Sensing the shift in mood, Jim pushed his tongue into Freddie’s mouth, and was met by his own.

Kissing deeply and frantically now, their hands were in each other’s hair, pulling the other closer, needing more.

Jim ran his hands down Freddie’s back until he was clutching his hips.

Bending his knees up to support Freddie’s back, Jim pulled Freddie down hard to feel how quickly his cock was hardening.

Freddie whimpered, and matched the feeling with his own.

The kissing became breathless as Jim swept his hand over the curve of Freddie’s hip, touching his body; delving, teasing, testing.

“Think you can take me sweetheart?” Jim whispered into Freddie’s neck, as his head was thrown back in pleasure.

Freddie leaned forward onto his knees, and Jim held himself steady as Freddie carefully lowered himself down onto Jim’s cock.

Fighting the wet heat that was engulfing him, Jim fiercely restrained his own hips, allowing Freddie to take what he could in his own time.

Freddie rocked carefully, returning his lips to Jim’s, tickling his face as his hair flopped forward.

Then satisfied, he leant back against Jim’s legs, hands gripping his own hair as he was overtaken by pleasure.
He rocked his hips forward, as Jim started to thrust gently.

“Aaaahhh right there….please” Freddie screamed, abandoning all sense of restraint as he took control.

Jim held Freddie’s hips, helping to take some of his weight, but he was already starting to lose control himself, as Freddie met his every thrust.

Freddie cried out again, and Jim felt as helpless as he had in the toilet cubicle at The Market Tavern.

Jim had no idea how Freddie was managing to do this to him, as the passive partner.

He never met anyone with such raw sexual power, who could also make him melt with just a glance.

Jim held a hand to Freddie’s hip, and wrapped the other around his cock, stroking fast, as Jim was concerned about his own ability to last in this position.

“Right there” Freddie screamed, as Jim thrust hard.

Both of them crashed over the edge together, bodies shuddering, heads thrown back, still moving in shallow thrusts, panting as they came back to earth.

Freddie flopped onto Jim’s chest, as warm arms were wrapped around him, and fingers combed through his hair.

Jim rolled Freddie carefully onto the soft mattress, tucking him safely against his hip, dropping sweet kisses to his cheek, as the memory of his nightmare returned.

Freddie smiled contently. His power was back in its place.

When Jim drew back, the contentment in Freddie’s eyes had been replaced with something deeper, that Jim couldn’t fathom.

“What will I do without you?” Freddie whispered, dissolving into a fresh batch of tears.
Encounters: New York, New York

Chapter Summary

Freddie makes the decision that he and Jim must go their separate ways before Queen head off to America, but he can’t quite do the deed. After overhearing a conversation between Jim and Brian, Freddie heads off to visit his parents - with a cunning plan. Jim makes a startling and extremely upsetting discovery about Freddie.

Chapter Notes

Lovies please see that I’ve updated the tags – I promise there is nothing graphic in the content - but please read with care...and I'm sorry.

I can’t thank you guys enough for the help and support you have given me. There have been moments this week when I actually thought I was losing my marbles, so thank you for reassuring me that there is value for you in Encounters….and for giving me a laugh 😊😊

Soft snores woke Freddie first.

He opened his eyes to see the soft hues of green of the sloping tent roof above him. He could hear bird song, and the feint hum of the city not far away.

The chilled air on Freddie’s face, at contrast to the warmth and comfort of his body, was surprisingly cosy.

Jim’s lips were still beside his temple, at the site of his last kiss before they had fallen asleep.

Freddie snuggled closer into Jim’s warmth. Under any other circumstances, this could have been the start of the happiest time of his life.

As it happened, tomorrow he would be leaving for America with Queen.

How could fate have been so good to him and so cruel simultaneously, by granting two dreams – one that would take him away from the other.

Freddie turned to Jim, to examine his face in detail, to watch him at peace, without the constant expression of concern he seemed to wear when looking at Freddie.

Freddie could never end this relationship. Never. Jim was the best thing that had ever happened to him.

That’s something Jim would have to do.

He couldn’t ask Jim to wait for him.
Freddie thought about his life before Jim, and it seemed such a very long time ago. Even the sexual relationships he’d had with other men during his time of knowing Jim seemed to pale into insignificance.

Had he been in love all along? Could those tiny caring actions – other than sex – also be deemed love?

The memory of how he used to flirt with Jim brought a smile to his face. The intuitiveness in which he had sought Jim out when he had been locked in his own head, just wanting to feel those arms wrapped around him, knowing he could rest there, that he would be safe long enough to heal.

When he thought about it now, in this space, he didn’t want anyone else to ever touch his body. Not in the way that Jim did, but he knew what would happen when the loneliness overtook him. When the show ended, and the energy that remained threatened to engulf him, when the others would go to their rooms at night, and he would need to take someone - anyone - with him, so he wasn’t alone.

He knew exactly what he would do.

That’s what had always made him special after all – Freddie Mercury - voice of an angel, fucks like a demon - there’s nothing he can’t bury.

He ran a gentle finger down Jim’s cheek, careful not to wake him.

“I love you Jim Hutton, but you need to find somebody special. Someone who is gorgeous, and sweet, and …here for you. I can’t ask you to wait for me, when I know I can’t wait for you.”

Freddie kissed his finger and dropped it gently onto Jim’s cheek, before wrapping his blanket around himself, unzipping the tent and crawling out to face the day.

Freddie was seated beside Deaky at the piano when Jim first spotted him.

Jim couldn’t help but smile at the rush of love that washed over him whenever he saw Freddie.

Freddie and Deaky’s heads were together, studying something intently, and they hadn’t seen him enter the room.

Freddie was showered, his hair was still fluffy, and Jim wondered what time he had got up. It wasn’t like Freddie to rise early. He usually stayed as long as he could get cuddles.

Jim wrapped an arm around him, and kissed his head. “Morning sweetheart, I was going to make you breakfast in the tent. You beat me to it.”

“I- I’m sorry” Freddie stammered, a little distant. “We have to get on this morning.” Freddie turned back to the piano.

“II- I’m sorry” Freddie stammered, a little distant. “We have to get on this morning.” Freddie turned back to the piano.

Deaky looked uncomfortable.

“Jim, you don’t have to hang around today. We’re going to be busy all day” Freddie quipped.

“Oh” said Jim, cut to the quick. “I’m going to put the kettle on anyway, so I’ll bring breakfast in for
you, you can eat while you work.”

Freddie didn’t respond.

Jim felt like he had been punched.

Finding himself to blame for something was usually easy for Jim, this time he couldn’t put his finger on a single thing he could have done wrong.

Jim headed into the kitchen to find Brian was feeding rather too much into the washing machine, and couldn’t get the door shut.

He smiled when Jim entered the room. “I do actually know that I’m damaging the machine, but that doesn’t stop me getting angry with it” he laughed.

Jim laughed, and reached for the kettle.

“So….what have you done to our little ray of sunshine? He’s prickly today” asked Brian.

In a way, Jim was relieved that Brian had raised the subject, it gave him the opportunity to raise his own questions.

“I know as much as you mate. I was gonna make him breakfast in the tent, but he was gone when I woke up, and he’s just regally dismissed me from the living room” Jim laughed humourlessly “…from the house, I think, hopefully not his life.”

“Aah” said Brian, taking the kettle from Jim. “The famous Mercury don’t call me, I’ll call you.”

“Sorry?” asked Jim.

“He’s trying to push you away” Brian stated, matter of fact.

Jim was horrified. “What do you mean? What have I done? Not…as in…permanently, surely? He’s going away tomorrow!”

Brian shrugged. “It’s Fred, whoever knows, but you’ve little time to fix it.”

“How do I do that if I don’t know what I’ve done?” Jim’s hands were in his hair.

Brian chuckled at how dramatic Jim was being. The longer he spent with Freddie, the more like him he became.

“Well you can either ask him, or you can wrestle him to the ground and tickle it out of him” suggested Brian.

Jim sniggered “The latter might be more effective.”

Brian pointed at the washer. “I’ve put loads of your stuff in by the way, I hope you don’t mind. I’m amazed you’ve anything left at home.”
“I haven’t” said Jim, but he was deep inside his own head, trying to work out firstly what he had done to upset Freddie, and secondly what he could do to repair it before they left for America.

Freddie stormed from the room, leaving an icy wake. The sound of the piano lid being slammed still reverberating.

Roger turned to Jim, one fist punching into his other hand. “What the fuck have you done to him?”

For a moment, Roger did look sort of terrifying. Like Animal from The Muppet Show, but with a psychopathic edge.

Jim pressed a hand to his heart “Nothing Roger! I have done nothing. We had a wonderful night! Help me here? You know him better than anyone!”

“The only person Fred doesn’t hate today is you Deaky. What’s your secret?” asked Brian.

“What did you do?” Roger turned to Brian interrupting him.

“I washed his satin pants at forty” said Brian slightly amused.

Roger made an ooh shape with his mouth.

Deaky had his head down, furiously rubbing something out in his book. He raised his head when he realised everyone was looking at him.

“Fred’s helping me to write a song, and it’s not going very well” offered Deaky with a frown.

“Go Deaky!” said Roger “What’s it called - Veronica, ooh Veronica” Roger burst into song.

Deaky tutted “It’s called spread your wings, and fly away.”

“Sounds about right” said Jim sadly.

“Why aren’t you coming to America Jim? Freddie told me this morning” asked Deaky.

Aah…so Freddie was talking to someone…just not him.

Jim sipped the last dregs from his cup, and shook his head sadly. “Work, mate.”

“Well, you’d better fucking sort it before we leave. Fred in a shit is a nightmare!” said Roger.

Freddie stomped back into the room, and plonked his songbook loudly on the piano top.

“I need to visit my fucking parents today, and tell them about America” Freddie announced to the room in general, looking hot and clammy, like he’d just been sick.

“Say bye to mine for me will you” said Brian, getting up to tidy everyone’s cups away.

Freddie rounded on Brian. “How can you ever get it?” he yelled. “Your parents think the sun shines out of you, my parents think I’m composing a fucking concerto! Queen…what’s that?” he mimicked.
Freddie was gasping for breath.

“What do you mean Fred?” asked Roger.

“I mean” Freddie hung his head “My Father doesn’t know I’m in a rock band” he said with a very small voice “He thinks I write classical pieces for the theatre, and now I have to tell him I’m going to America to be in a rock band, and he will probably read about me in the paper” he gasped.

“Freddie!” Brian was shocked. “Why haven’t you told him the truth?”

“I can’t Brian!” Freddie snarled. “My parents aren’t like yours. His greatest wish for me isn’t to be an axe hero. They spent their life savings on my education, and that went….shit…forget it…it’s all about being proper to him…and now I have to tell him….” Freddie trailed off, hands to his knees.

“Freddie, slow your breathing down for me honey” said Jim firmly.

“Don’t fucking tell me how to feel!” he screamed.

Anyone else would have viewed Freddie’s mood as artistic temperament. A rock star having a meltdown – a pink fit – how very NME.

Jim knew differently. His lover was in real pain. His anguish was sincere.

Jim held out a hand to Freddie. “Come here.”

Freddie staggered, like a deer in headlights, trapped between his source of comfort, and the lover he was trying to let down gently.

Brian rolled his eyes around the room, and to the door. “Come on lads, we need to get packed up.”

One by one the boys filed from the room.

Roger squeezed Freddie’s shoulder “It’ll be alright Fred.”

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“Come on. Talk to me. I know it’s not that you don’t trust me Freddie, because I know you, and if that was true you wouldn’t have let me this close to you. All this time we’re wasting when we are going to be apart. Just tell me what is on your mind, we can work through it, whatever it is?”

Freddie remained silent, and stared at his feet.

Jim linked his fingers through Freddie’s, and steered him around the settee arm onto his lap.

Freddie allowed him.

Jim laid a hand on his chest “Come on. Tell me what’s in here?”

Freddie was silent.

“I’m not going to hurt you Freddie, like those other men did” Jim offered, wondering how Bill Reid would have reacted in these circumstances.
“You will” Freddie started with a small voice. “As soon as I’m gone, you’ll find someone perfect.”

“I’m sorry honey, I don’t understand – do you think I’m going to find someone else because you are going on tour?” Jim asked softly, trying to fill in the words that Freddie left blank.

Jim squeezed him.

“Come on honey. Out it comes” he coaxed.

“Well…..won’t you?” Freddie finally raised his eyes to meet Jim’s. “Why wouldn’t you? What do you get out of it?”


Freddie’s eyebrows shot up into his hair. “Are you telling me not to go to America?” he shouted incredulously, ready to defend himself from imaginary attack.

“No, no!! of course not. The road is your destiny. You’re made for this. America is exactly where you need to be” insisted Jim.

Freddie leaped to his feet.

“I don’t understand you! You say you won’t get someone else, you won’t come with me, but you say I should go! What do you want from me?” Freddie yelled.

“Honey, you’re a performer. That’s what you do. That’s what you did when I met you - I always knew that Queen would be huge - it was only a matter of time before we were apart for long spells!” Jim took Freddie’s hand “Honey, this is just the beginning for you… and us, but we’re going to need to communicate to stay strong.”

“Are you asking me not to see other men?” Freddie said, scratching his head.

Jim would have been amused if his heart wasn’t breaking.

He couldn’t ask Freddie not to feed his love of sex, that WAS a cruel and unusual form of punishment, and most certainly a kiss of death for their relationship.

Freddie would need affection on his travels, and would fall into the arms of anyone who offered it.

Jim on the other hand knew he would pine for Freddie every day for six weeks straight, but he couldn’t ask for monogamy. Freddie was only 21 years old, and at the start of his journey.

“No, Freddie. I’m not asking that.” Jim dropped his head. He couldn’t allow Freddie to see the tears forming. He needed to be strong.

“So, you want me to sleep with other men?!” Freddie’s voice was rising in frustration.

“No, of course I don’t want you to sleep with other men darling! …. but I can’t ask you not to. It wouldn’t be fair on you.”

“My God Jim!” Freddie yelled “This is turning into one of Brian’s songs! What the hell are you saying?” Freddie’s hands were in his hair.

“I’m just saying…. ” Jim’s voice was very small. “I’m just saying….I love you with all my heart.”

Freddie ran towards the door. “You can’t!” he yelled. “People just don’t….love me.”
The door slammed, and he was gone.

Freddie threw himself onto his bed, sobbing into his rolled up blanket like a small child.

He didn’t care what he looked like, there was no one here to see him.

There never would be.

He had come so close. So close to forgetting what it felt like to be alone in the world.

So close to feeling part of a family.

It was cruel.

Being so close to Jim in the last few weeks would make Freddie feel even more empty when he wasn’t around.

More empty than he’d ever felt in his life.

He never thought he would hear those words again. Part of him wished he hadn’t – they hurt too much – too much when it ended.

It was easy to have sex. In America, Freddie would be lining up boys with cute accents, making dreams come true for those who wanted to fuck a rock star.

It wasn’t quite so easy to get hugs.

It wasn’t easy to fall asleep at night without a care in the world because you were sheltered, and held.

Jim had been so affectionate, so full of humour, so willing from the day Freddie met him. That stern face, breaking into smiles as he had lifted Freddie down from the podium where they had first met.

Freddie turned slowly onto his back, and let the images come.

He was completely alone now.

Jim hadn’t cared enough to follow him.

Freddie was glad he hadn’t. There was nothing attractive about a man blubbing snot everywhere.

Freddie looked up at the ceiling, and felt as though he was not quite in his own body.

He felt a familiar tingling in his hands and feet, as darkness started to cloud his peripheral vision. His head was suddenly crowded with noise and bustle, none of which he could pinpoint.

Then it stopped, and it was silent again.

The silence brought with it a memory. A memory of a time he had actually been completely alone.

Freddie pulled open the cabinet drawer next to his bed.
He removed most of the drawer’s contents, dropping them into the floor, before rummaging around at the back.

It was still there.

A piece of paper, folded small. Yellow now, and more fragile with age.

Freddie opened the paper, taking care not to tear it.

He laid back onto his pillow to read.

Moments later, he leant over the side of his bed, and picked up a hard backed note book from the floor, and a pen, and began to write.

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Jim was sitting with his head in his hands when Brian entered the room, still drying his hands on a tea towel.

“Dare I ask what that was about?” he asked softly, perturbed at seeing Jim so distressed.

Jim shook his head. Brian could see from the red rims of his eyes that he was tired. Exhausted even.

“Believe it or not Brian, I just told him that I love him. I just can’t get through to him! To say the man is layered is an understatement.”

Brian clapped a hand on Jim’s shoulder, and sat beside him.

“Freddie has the oddest relationship with his parents, Jim. Mum and Dad are always telling me the lovely things they say about him over the garden fence. They’re so proud you know, but Freddie… I dunno, it’s hard for him I guess – with their culture. What I’m trying to say is, he’ll be more relaxed once he’s done the deed. Why don’t you talk to him again then?”

“I was being naive Brian.” Jim shook his head. “I didn’t really know what to expect out of our last couple of days together. We haven’t been together that long you know. Did I think I could just wave him off smiling, and we’d be fine, I don’t know. I’ve always been the level-headed one.”

Brian rolled his eyes. He was familiar with that role.

“I knew how I felt about Freddie from the start. I knew he was special.” Jim began “I’ve pursued him, I’ve been steady and reassuring….”

“You’ve been his bloody hero at times mate” Brian cut in.

“But what now?” Jim continued. “I’m falling apart, so I can’t imagine how Freddie is handling this, and getting him to talk about his feelings…..” Jim whistled. “It’s like I’m the enemy, as soon as I ask him anything about himself. The shutters come down.”

“I think that’s always been your problem though Jim…” started Brian “…you accuse Freddie of not talking, but how well does Freddie know what’s on your mind? I mean, how long did it take you to make a move on him in the first place? I don’t mean this the way it sounds Jim, but you stood back and watched while Paul, Bill, and Winnie happen. You could have moved in a lot quicker than you
“Brian he’s going to be a rock and roll legend! He’s gorgeous, he’s everybody’s friend, he’s way out of my league. I wanted him to choose to be with me, I couldn’t have told him how I felt, he’d have kissed me back …out of pity!” Jim dropped his head.

Brian wasn’t giving up. They had all come this far. “Jim, you’re dwelling too much on your own insecurities. How is that different to how you eventually told him how you felt anyway?!”

Jim snorted “I was angrier!”

“And now? How do you feel now?”

“I love him so much Brian.”

“But you won’t come to America with us?”

Jim dropped his head.

“I’ve tried it every which way in my head, I just can’t make it work in the long term. So, I throw everything up in the air, and I jump on the plane with you all tomorrow. I quit my job at the bar, and give up my flat. What happens in six weeks’ time? Six weeks is not very long Brian. You guys will be back, and hopefully you will have made a bit of money, but you’ll be back to looking for gigs, or waiting for the next tour. I can’t ask Freddie to make my rent. He might earn more in the short term, but that needs to go back into the band. It’s not a pride thing, but I won’t let him keep me, he needs to concentrate on his music. I’m not trained for anything else – other than the police force…” Brian’s eyebrows hit the ceiling, but Jim was on a roll. “… and even if I make the decision to get back onto that path, it’ll take months to go through what I’ve missed, and re-join a station, I’ll have bankrupted him by then! I won’t do it to him Brian. I won’t.”

Jim paused for breath, so Brian took his opportunity.

“See, what I can’t work out is if the job is a reason to stay, or it’s holding you back from coming to America? Hypothetically, if you didn’t have this job, right now, today, would you come?”

Jim didn’t miss a beat before answering. “Yes Brian. I would follow Freddie right until the ends of the earth.”

What Brian and Jim didn’t realise, was that Freddie was in the hallway listening to every word.

He hadn’t meant to listen, he was trying to sneak out of the house without being seen.

Freddie really didn’t need Jim to see him right now. He would fall apart, right into his arms.

He needed Jim to be strong, but listening to their words an idea was forming in his head, and it was gaining traction.

Freddie’s idea relied upon the actions of another - of a man who Freddie swore he would never trust again as long as he lived.
His idea was risky. If it didn’t work out, it would be the meanest thing he had ever done in his life, but if it did work out, well he had to try.....

The grandfather clock ticked loudly in the hallway.

Freddie always had the overbearing urge to laugh in these situations.

“Eat up Freddie” urged Jer. “Don’t let your meal go cold. It’s your favourite – dhansak.”

Freddie smiled warmly. “It’s lovely Mama, thank you. I do appreciate the trouble you have gone to.”

“I’ve made some of those lovely little pastries for after too. You should take some home for your housemates.” Jer smiled, and squeezed Freddie’s hand from across the table. “It’s lovely to have you home, even just for the afternoon.”

The room fell silent again.

Freddie felt the oppression as soon as he walked into his parents home. It’s not that he didn’t love the occupants - he loved them so much - but he couldn’t relate to their restrictive way of life. He couldn’t relate to his Father.

He kicked Kashmira under the table, who proceeded to giggle, while trying to push a large piece of chicken into her mouth.

Bomi stopped eating for a moment, and stared at each of his children in turn.

Freddie, deliberately avoiding his eye, busied himself looking around the room at the paintings on the wall, and the trinkets on top of far too many dressers. All of eastern decent. Probably worth a fortune.

His avoidance of Bomi’s gaze caused Kashmira to giggle some more.

Bomi cleared his throat, and put down his cutlery.

“So….America Farrokh?”

“Yes, Papa” said Freddie politely.

“The other side of the Atlantic Ocean” Kashmira added under her breath, reducing Freddie and Jer to fits of giggles.

“Queen, you say?” said Bomi deadpan.

Kashmira could barely hold herself together.

“Yes, with my housemates, Brian, Roger and John. Brian plays the guitar, Roger – the drums, and John the bass. You know Brian, Papa – Brian May?” Freddie knew that his parents liked the May’s, and he was scrounging for brownie points.
“Oh yes!” shrieked Jer, wringing her hands, trying to help Freddie.

She nudged Bomi “You know the May’s, next door but one, lovely boy Brian. Ruth is always telling me what he’s up to with that guitar of his. They have all been praying he would get his big break soon. How lovely for you all. Harold and he built that guitar out of an old fireplace you know.” She clapped her hands together. “I’m so pleased for you Freddie love.”

“And what do you do in this ….band?” asked Bomi quietly.

“I play the piano, and I sing, and I compose the songs with Brian. We’ve been playing a few of the local bars lately to get our name out there.”

Freddie stopped, and swallowed hard. He could hear his heart thumping. He couldn’t breathe, but the time was now.

Freddie continued. “Actually we’ve been playing this one bar called The Market Tavern a lot.”

Freddie noticed his mother clasp her hands together and look down at her lap. Kashmira went pale.

Freddie guessed his Father didn’t know that they had seen him play that night.

“It’s very entertaining. It’s a gay bar – you know where….”

Bomi cleared his throat, and reached for his napkin. “Yes, I get the point Farrokh, thank you.”

“Anyway…” He paused for dramatic effect, but ploughed on before he lost his nerve “…my friend Jim Hutton got caught having sex in the toilet the other night…with a man!” Freddie giggled.

“No!” said Jer, her hand to her chest. “That lovely boy we had tea with the other afternoon, but he was so pleasant!”

“I know, he’s so lovely. He’s such a good friend” Freddie’s eyes were huge.

“Anyway…” It was out now, he had to continue, he was committed. “…Jim’s boss Derek Green, said if he received one more complaint about from a member of the public, that Jim would be fired. Can you believe it?”

Bomi rose out of his chair, and thumped his hand down on the table.

“Stop, stop this instant! Do not talk about such matters in front of your mother and Kashmira – have some respect! Especially at meal times.” He paused, and sat back down. “I’m not happy about you befriending this man Farrokh, where did you say he worked again?”

“The Market Tavern Papa. I forget the address, but the phone number is in the Yellow Pages.”

“And what is your business there? With his …Jim Hutton? A man like that didn’t ought to be around youth. It’s immoral. What happened to your composing Farrokh?”

Freddie clasped his hands together, looking down at the table, suitably chastised. “Jim is my friend. He helps us with setting up the stage for the band, and is kind of my security guard” Freddie finished with a flourish, cementing the proximity of their work in his Father’s mind.

“Not anymore he’s not!” said Bomi firmly.

“Anyway, let’s not talk about that anymore. What of your composing son?”
Subject dismissed. Point made. It was up to the universe now.

Freddie buried his red face while riffling through his bag, “I wrote some classical pieces for you, would you like to hear them after dinner?”

“That would be lovely” said Bomi, softening. “It’s a while since we have had a song around the piano.

Freddie emptied the contents of his bag, and pulled a face. “I’m sorry, I seem to have picked up the wrong song book. Don’t worry though, I’ll run along to the telephone box after dinner, and call Brian. He was going to visit his parents today, I’ll ask him to bring it along.”

“Yes. I would like to hear it Farrokh, thank you” said Bomi.

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“Jim?... hi ....darling…it’s Freddie” he said shyly not sure if Jim would even take his call.

“Darling!” Jim said so warmly, so relieved to hear from Freddie.

“Are you alright sweetheart? How are you feeling?”

“I’m good thank you” Freddie continued, totally dismissing their strong words of earlier.

Jim knew that if Freddie didn’t want to talk about something, then he absolutely would not talk about it.

It was like the morning’s factions had never even taken place.

“I’m so sorry to ask a favour, but ….are you working today?” It suddenly occurred to Freddie that Jim may not be available – to him at least.

“No, honey, where are you? Shall I meet you?” Jim asked hopefully.

“Erm….is Brian with you?” Freddie asked tentatively.

“No, darling, what do you need? Just tell me? Spit it out.”

“I’m at my parents, and… erm I need my song book. Not the one with Queen stuff in, the classical piece I was working on, do you remember? The black one? I had it the other morning when we had tea in our bed?”

Jim chuckled. If Freddie was referring to their time together, everything must be ok.

“The sofa you mean?” Jim laughed. “Do you mean the one with the squiggles in? Freddie, you have hundreds of songbooks!” Jim laughed. “Where is it?” Freddie laughed too, and Jim was relieved that their words had not had any lasting damage – no more than six weeks apart would anyway.

“It’s in the cabinet by my bed, the lacquered one. Would you please bring it to Brian’s parents? Sorry, I know it’s a big ask.”

“Why don’t I just bring it to you honey?” Jim was perplexed.
“Erm…things are a bit difficult with my parents Jim. I’m sorry darling, I truly am.”

Jim could hear the sincerity in his voice, and knew his remorse was genuine. Freddie would introduce Jim to his Father – if he could.

“If you could please drop it at Brian’s parents I will pick it up from there?”

“Yes, ok, but you owe me” Jim chuckled conspiratorially.

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll pick it up later” Freddie said resolutely, sorry he had asked.

“Freddie I’m joking honey! Please don’t fret… but I was absolutely serious about you owing me. I missed you this morning, you have to let me kiss you all over later…..and I mean all over…..and I’ll tickle!”

Jim was relieved to hear Freddie’s squeal of laughter.

“Mmmmmmm.” Jim could practically hear Freddie purr.

“Ok, those are my terms. Where do Brian’s parents live?”

“Feltham.”

“Sorry?”

“Feltham. Next door but one to my parents. I’ll give you the address”

Jim laughed “In today’s traffic?! I’m so taking this out on your body.”

“Can’t wait” purred Freddie.

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Jim dashed across the room.

Although he had been in Freddie’s room before, it was like a different place every time he visited.

Freddie was an odd mix of neat, and chaotic. On this occasion, his room was immaculately neat.

Costumes hung on the back of the door. Beautifully drawn pieces of artwork on the walls, and the classics stacked neatly on a shelf.

Freddie must have packed for the trip already. The room wasn’t nearly as full.

Freddie’s blanket was rolled up on his pillow, and Jim gave it a quick squeeze as though it was Freddie.

He opened the top drawer of Freddie’s cabinet, and saw his black leather notebook on the top.

This was his Queen one, Jim was sure of that, he had watched Freddie Tippex a small Q in the bottom right hand corner during the time he was mute. Jim popped it to the side, and pulled out another four stacked identical black notebooks.
Jim chuckled to himself.

So Freddie, organisation in the disorganised.

Quickly he flicked through one or two of the books looking for a last entry that looked like an incomplete song.

There was a lot in the books, and it wasn’t easy to find.

Song lyrics, graphics, cartoons, clothing designs, and doodles - lots and lots of doodles.

Verses that had never seen the light of day, so terribly sad, and when Jim looked at the date he could see they had been written during his time with Paul and Bill.

Jim stopped reading, it was an invasion of Freddie’s privacy, and he had promised Freddie that he would let him reveal parts of himself when he was ready, and not a moment before.

He flicked to the back of the notebook, thinking perhaps the song would be the last entry. There were a few blank pages, and then Jim saw what looked like the start of a letter.

He knew he shouldn’t.

He absolutely shouldn’t.

He couldn’t stop himself when he noticed the date. It was today’s date, and the time was shortly after Jim had told Freddie he loved him.

Was this letter for him? Was Freddie finally going to tell Jim how he felt in a letter?

His quickly flicked his eyes over the words as though expecting to be caught at any minute, but he was soon drawn in. The content needed time, it needed to be read with care.

Freddie had written to his Father.


Dearest Father,

Although many years have passed since I was removed from school, it has just come to my attention that I never replied to your letter.

I didn’t have the words. I have the words now.

I will never come to terms with the contents of your letter. I was just a young boy, and in grave danger, I needed your help, and you let me down.

I have been out in the world for a long time now, and I have dealt with many types of men.

It has taken a long time, but I understand now that I was a victim. A victim of cruel physical and mental abuse at the hands of those who were meant to protect me.

No young man is meant to have those experiences at all – never mind at such a young age. It wasn’t right.

I will never recover from what happened to me, or how you let me down - why didn’t you help me? Didn’t you know it was wrong either, or did you not believe I was telling you the truth?
I pleaded for your help, why wasn’t that enough?

You may be pleased to know that I did deal with my problems in my own way - as you told me to. Not in a way that you would be proud of, but I have taken back my power, and I have soared. I’m just about to go to America to become a rock star.

I can help myself now, make my own choices. I couldn’t help myself then, that was your job, you should have removed me from the school immediately and brought me home to my family like I asked.

The irony was not lost that the very men responsible for my abuse were the ones who summoned you to the school. The ones who saw fit to expel me for loving another boy. A boy who shielded me from the abuse dealt by them. It would seem that in our faith, acts between two men in love is wrong, but in abuse of power is just fine. You endorsed that when you didn’t act, and then sought to shame me for my expulsion.

You were also wrong. I have found love and light despite the evils that were forced upon me. His name is Jim Hutton. He is gentle and kind and loving, and he doesn’t judge me or hurry me, and I am growing in confidence every day because of him. I don’t know how he puts up with me sometimes, but he does, and he comes back stronger.

I spoke to Mama a couple of weeks ago about the blanket you sent to me all those years ago. It wasn’t to keep me pure from sin as you put it, Mama sent it to me to give me comfort while I was away from home. She had washed it, and fragranced it with the flowers from home. So thank you for that. I cherish it always. In case you are worried I didn’t tell Mama the ‘real’ reason you told me that I had received the blanket. Nor will she or Kash ever learn about my troubles at school. I cannot inflict that heart ache upon them, nor the knowledge that you turned the other cheek when I was in danger.

Despite everything Sir, I will always love and respect you. You are my Father after all, and I guess that makes me the better man.

Love Always

Freddie (Farrokh died in India)
Chapter Summary

Jim is torn apart by what he learns about Freddie in a letter written by his father many years ago, and questions his own integrity. Freddie however seems to be in much better spirits after visiting his family, and is even up for a little truth telling.

Jim takes Freddie back to his home for their final evening before America, and is surprised when Freddie finally makes himself at home there.

Chapter Notes

I’m sorry these chapters are taking so long to get to you lovies, I’m suddenly having literal nightmares about every word! So glad I haven’t been like this all the way through, or nothing would have been written!

Thank you so much to LadyAmaranthine for the term ‘primal wound.’ 😊

Jim wasn’t sure when he had started to cry, but he could not see clearly for the tears.

He grabbed at his pocket hoping he had packed a clean handkerchief.

Jim glanced around the room certain that he would be seen, caught on candid camera, delving into his lover’s most personal thoughts, but thoughts that could not be ignored now that they had seen the light of day.

He felt naked, exposed, like he had betrayed his lover in the most heinous fashion, and the spot light had fallen upon him.

Jim convinced himself he could hear footfall on the stairs, that Roger would be at the door at any minute demanding to know why he was going through his best friend’s belongings.

Jim also knew he was stalling.

Staggering at the door to his heart and his mind, knowing he had to process what he had read, but instead wasting his thoughts on worries about being caught. A way of protecting himself from the wave of emotions that would surely come.

Things he had known deep down – if he was honest with himself - questions he’d had about Freddie.

The things Freddie said that infuriated Jim sometimes.

The way he behaved.

The behaviour he accepted from others.
Jim had assumed a string of bad boys – selfish lovers who had used Freddie until the lines of acceptability had blurred.

But this? Never in his worst nightmares had Jim expected something to this level of depravity. Freddie was just a child.

Questions were finding answers, actions were finding reason.

More questions raised.

Why had Freddie’s father refuse to help him? Just a child, miles from home.

What was the nature of the incident exactly – physical and mental abuse? Acts between two men? Abuse of power? Surely not, Freddie was just a boy!

Why didn’t the law protect him – what was the law in India governing the protection of children?

How long had the abuse gone on for?

Who could Freddie have confided in anyway?

He should confide in the one person who could do something to help him.

The one person who it would seem had let him down in the most fundamental way imaginable - his own father.

How brave would a child need to be to tell someone what was happening to them in the first place?

Jim had seen that bravery in Freddie, that sense of indignation, the awareness of right and wrong.

He’d also seen it beaten down time and again.

He couldn’t bear it.

The thought of Freddie, such a small boy on his own in the world being inflicted with such pain and suffering.

He felt his anger rising.

Freddie may have been a small boy then, but Jim was a man now.

How he wanted to visit Freddie’s father, and serve him the most enormous piece of his mind.

Equally, he hoped never to meet Freddie’s father. He now prayed he never had the misfortune. He couldn’t be held responsible for his actions.

He also knew he was misappropriating blame.

Jim dropped his head into his hands, covering his eyes for a moment, but it didn’t ease the din in his own head.

He had to get out of here. He had to go somewhere – away – just somewhere to gather the pieces of himself together.

How could he face Freddie now. Knowing what he knew. Knowing he had committed a terrible act of disloyalty.
Jim closed the notebook and kissed the cover.

Freddie could never know he had seen it.

Jim knew that if they lived to be a hundred, the chances of Freddie ever opening up about his time at school were slim. He couldn’t confide the smallest things, even in those he trusted.

How difficult he must find it to trust anyone.

Jim suddenly realised what he had been sensing in Freddie all along – battle scars, war wounds, in one so bright and fun and loving.

The memory of their conversation the night Jim had finally told Freddie how he felt in the toilet at the bar returned to him…ruined? Could this be what he meant?

Jim had once thought of Freddie as a very horny young boy, with the sexual experience of a forty year old.

How could Freddie bear to be intimate with men?

Had Jim been such an inconsiderate lover as to have not spotted that Freddie was enduring his affections, instead of enjoying them?

Jim couldn’t bear to be in his own company right now. He needed to get out.

He opened the last black notebook, and sure enough there were the musical symbols he had seen Freddie using in his book just a few mornings ago, but what now felt like an eternity.

He popped the notebook into his pocket, and neatly tucked all the other books back into the drawer.

He closed the drawer softly, and turned to leave, when he noticed a small folded piece of paper on the floor.

It was yellowing on the edges, and almost looked delicate.

He carefully opened up the paper, and saw beautiful hand writing. It almost looked as though it had been written with a quill.

Jim knew this not to be Freddie’s hand writing.

Freddie’s writing was that of a true artist - full of scrawls and loops - that which would be a calligrapher’s dream, giving way to a fun artistic personality.

This writing was feint and delicate, and easily decipherable.

Jim searched the page for a date, but could not find one. There were no identifying marks that revealed where the letter even came from.

His eyes were halfway down the page before it even occurred to him to stop reading.

Dear Farrokh,

I received your letter and was greatly distressed and disturbed by its content. I trust that by now you have had some time to reflect upon your actions, and have chosen a wiser path?
I will not correspond with the headmaster as you have requested, and would advise you to keep your own counsel from now on. You are a man now Farrokh, and must resolve your own issues – especially those you bring upon yourself.

I will grant your wishes to undertake boxing tuition. Boxing is a sport of kings, and I trust you will learn and compete with an integrity that will bring honour to our family. I will correspond with the sports faculty, and make the required payment for your tuition to begin presently.

I must stress Farrokh the importance that you drop the aforementioned incident immediately. I have no doubt that the masters and students are calling you a liar, as they are aware of the religious convictions of this family. If you study hard, worship, and remain faithful, the devil cannot corrupt your true intention. You dropped your guard when you assisted the other boy with a test that was meant for him. If you give Him these opportunities, you will never find the path to love, light and righteousness. Speak to no one of your troubles, and only ever sleep in your own bed.

Your Mother asked me to enclose this blanket from a time when you were under our care and direction. Use it wisely to remind you to remain pure, and clean of sin and corruption. I must insist that your Mother never hear of this business.

You will remain at the school and complete the education that you have been privileged to receive.

Yours Sincerely

Your Father

Jim carefully folded the letter and dropped it into the drawer.

He had to get out of the house, and right now.

Jim staggered to his feet, he could hear his breath coming hard, his vision was closing in, as he ran down the stairs.

He heard himself sob as he ran down the hallway, and reached for the door handle.

He heard Brian calling his name, but he couldn’t stop, he couldn’t breathe, and he certainly couldn’t confide what he had seen.

Was this just an inkling of what Freddie had suffered all those years ago. Being in the depths of pain and despair, and not being able to tell anyone.

Jim fell heavily into the car, started the engine, and roared down the street towards Feltham.

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Jim had been sitting in the car for a while when he saw Freddie wander out of his parent’s gate.

He had needed time to think, and had stopped the car on the way to allow himself to shed helpless tears that he didn’t want anyone to see. Least of all Freddie.
Freddie looked so young today.

He could be mistaken for a teen, wearing jeans and trainers. He walked with his head down, hands in his pockets, scuffing his feet.

Jim felt the familiar rush of warmth, and despite everything, he felt himself smile.

Whatever had come before Jim, whatever horrifying secrets Freddie held in his past, he was here now, safe and happy, and all his.

“Hey, sexy” Jim called to him with a loud whisper.

Freddie appeared temporarily startled, and looked over his shoulder back towards his parents’ house, before acknowledging Jim with a smile.

He walked cautiously over to Jim’s car, approaching the window he said quietly “Don’t touch me.”

Jim chuckled “I’m not gonna touch you darling, don’t worry, we’re just two friends having a chat.”

Freddie gasped, and in spite of himself cupped a hand around Jim’s cheek. “Are you OK darling?” he asked with concern. “You look very pale, are you feeling poorly?”

So much for keeping his feelings to himself!

“I’m fine, sweetheart” Jim assured him “I’ve just got a bit of a headache, that’s all. I’ll get some tablets in a while. Here’s your book.”

Jim handed the book to Freddie, concerned that it was the wrong book, even though he absolutely knew it wasn’t.

“How’s it going in there?” Jim nodded towards Freddie’s parents’ house.

“Hmmmm, I’m going to sweeten them up with a bit of Chopin” Freddie smiled.

“Did you come on the train?” Jim asked.

Freddie nodded.

“I’m going to get some food for this evening, I’d like to cook for you at my place tonight if that’s ok? We’ll have a nice evening together, and then when you’re ready I’ll take you home. Would you like that sweetheart?” Jim asked carefully, not sure how Freddie would react to spending the evening at his house.

Jim wanted Freddie all to himself on the last night they would be together.

Freddie looked horrified. “Oh no, you’re not going to make me eat are you? I just had lunch at my parents.”

Jim smiled. It was nice to hear Freddie speak out loud about something he was so sensitive about. It was reassuring to hear him at least attempt to say no.

“Well….no, I’d never MAKE you eat sweetheart, but let’s cook together, you might feel like having some later on.”

Freddie nodded. “Ok, I’d like that.”
“When you have finished with your parents, come to the train station, I’ll park up there. No one will be suspicious then.”

“I want to kiss you” whispered Freddie.

“I know honey. Remember my payment for this – you’ve got to let me …erm….I mean I’d like to kiss you all over…if that’s ok?” Jim stammered, suddenly very aware of his need not to pressure Freddie.

Freddie laughed “Suddenly you’re the shy one.”

Jim laughed humourlessly. “We’ll have a lovely evening. I’ll miss you until them sweetheart.” Jim discreetly kissed his own hand and squeezed Freddie’s with it.

Jim watched Freddie wander slowly back towards the house. He had done it. His first interaction with Freddie since reading the letter. He hoped it had gone well.

Freddie seemed a little cheerier at least, and he had surprisingly agreed to the evening. Jim hoped Freddie hadn’t felt pressured, but he did just want to make it nice for him.

Freddie was seated at the breakfast bar swinging a knife around like a Samurai sword.

Jim took his chances, and wrapped his arms around him, resting his chin on Freddie’s shoulder, laughing.

“You weren’t kidding when you said you had no idea how to chop vegetables were you?!”

Freddie pouted, them crumbled into giggles.

The peppers and onions for the pasta were mush on the chopping board where they have been savaged into tiny pieces.

Jim had to be extra vigilant. He needed to make sure he treated Freddie as he always had, give away no hints that anything was different.

He dropped a kiss behind his ear, and tipped the vegetables into the bubbling hot sauce on the hob.

“So, how are you feeling about tomorrow? All packed and ready?” Jim tried to keep talk of America light, and about the business of music.

Freddie took a sip of white wine. “Nearly, a few last personal things. John had arranged for a company to take our instruments and amps today, so they will be gone now. Really glad I wasn’t there to see how they manhandled my piano to be honest.” Freddie pouted.

Jim chuckled. “They are used to doing it honey. Don’t worry they will take good care of your piano. I must say, it is very beautiful….much like it’s owner.”

Freddie smiled, and blushed.

After a moment’s silence, Freddie said “Jim?” Jim smiled. “If I confess something to you will you
not laugh please?”

Just the sentence made Jim laugh. Freddie raised an eyebrow. “I’m sorry sweetness, it’s a nervous tick.”

“I really don’t like flying” Freddie said quietly looking down into his lap.

Jim managed to keep a straight face. “Oh sweetie, many people don’t like flying. You just have to think of it as an opportunity to rest before the shows. Get some sleep. Snuggle up in your blanket, have a glass of wine – or twelve - and watch a movie. You’ll soon be there.”

Freddie bit his lip. “I don’t think I can be seen with my blanket. I’m meant to be a rock God.”

Jim couldn’t help it, it was the serious way in which Freddie spoke, he doubled over in laughter.

“Rock Gods all have blankets on planes Freddie….” Jim reassured him with humour “…none as classy as yours though.”

Freddie rolled his eyes.

Jim couldn’t help wishing he could be beside Freddie on that plane - just to look after him.

Freddie started to laugh too.

Jim served the pasta into one large bowl, and seating himself beside Freddie at the breakfast bar, presented him with a dessert spoon.

Freddie raised one eyebrow. “This is not etiquette Mr Hutton” he said amused.

“Nope” said Jim. “It’s reverse psychology. If I gave you a bowl of pasta and some cutlery, you would eat two mouthfuls, and say you were full. If you eat with a spoon out of MY bowl, you’ll eat at least five.”

Freddie couldn’t help it, he nudged Jim and laughed out loud.

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“So, have you never had sex with a woman?” asked Jim, getting flashbacks of the first evening with the boys at Freddie’s home.

Freddie nodded, taking a sip of his wine. “Yeah, loads.”

Jim raised an eyebrow questioningly.

Freddie slapped Jim’s thigh laughing. “Ok, not loads – a few though. I love women…but I didn’t find it very satisfying, and I don’t think they did either.” Freddie glanced away blushing. “Women just don’t hit the spot, plus I was at an all-boys boarding school for like…ten years, so women are an alien species to me anyway.”

Jim’s heart banged in his chest. Ten years?!

“Is that an exaggeration Freddie?” he asked gently, trying to smile, “…or were you actually at
“Erm….” Freddie cleared his throat, thinking for a moment. “I went when I was eight, and went home to Zanzibar when I was seventeen….that’s…” Freddie counted on his fingers, laughing “…nine years.” Freddie looked Jim in the eye. “Is that long enough for you?”

Jim just wanted to pull him close, but he had to keep things light.

“So, how old were you when you had your first boyfriend?” Jim couldn’t believe he’d said it. What was wrong with him?!

Freddie laughed, and rolled his eyes. “You are inquisitive tonight Mr Hutton!” Freddie smiled, but he was far away in his mind. “I was fourteen. He was….a little older.”

Jim smiled tightly.

“He….had to let me down in the end. I was heartbroken at the time, but things were difficult you know. I know now why he had to let me go….but he did love me! I know he did.” Freddie’s eyes were huge.

So, we were talking about the boy who had shielded him from his abusers.

“I’m sure he did” said Jim gently with a smile. “You know Freddie, despite what you may think, you really are easy to love.” Jim didn’t give Freddie the opportunity to argue. “I’m going to prove it to you” he continued. “In ten years’ time, the whole world will love you – mark my words.”

Jim changed the subject.

“I notice you are always with older men – never boys your age.” It was more of a statement than a question.

Freddie playfully jumped off his stool and pressed his body hard against Jim’s. “I’m a man Mr Hutton, not a boy, I can show you again if you need proof.”

Jim couldn’t help but laugh, but when he looked at Freddie his eyes were darkening, his rosebud lips slightly open, his chest flushed.

He was aroused.

There was no sign of doubt, uncertainty, or the lost little boy of boarding school.

Freddie was indeed a man – a man with an insane sex drive - and Jim thought it delicious.

Jim would overcome what he had learnt. It would become part of their history – his and Freddie’s – it couldn’t be changed, it couldn’t be erased.

The why’s and wherefores’ notwithstanding, sex was how Freddie communicated, and If sex was the way that Jim could show Freddie his love, then my God he’d talk his arse off!

If Freddie has sexual prowess, then Jim (usually) had self-control.

“We’re going to have a little talk” Jim growled in Freddie’s ear.

He felt Freddie stiffen.

“Well, you are going to talk. I am going to use my tongue to communicate with you in other ways.”
He kissed a sensitive spot behind Freddie’s ear, and nibbled gently on his ear lobe. “When is your birthday?”

“5th September” Freddie answered breathlessly.

“Virgo, that’s why you are so neat” Jim kissed Freddie’s neck nipping the skin.

“Take your clothes off” Jim commanded.

“I thought you said you weren’t going to make love to me today?” Freddie gasped out breathlessly, as Jim pushed a finger inside him slowly.

“I’m not. I’m giving you an internal massage” Jim growled in his ear, watching carefully for any change in his lover’s body. Any subtle hint that he might not be as into this as Jim initially thought. There was nothing. Every light was green.

“Can you massage faster?” quipped Freddie cheekily through his gasps.

“Nope!” said Jim resolutely keeping up a slow gentle rhythm.

Freddie’s back arched when Jim found the perfect spot, giving Jim the opportunity to add another finger – just as slowly – driving Freddie insane.

Jim reached his other arm over Freddie’s shoulder, pulling him closer against his chest. The arm continued, travelling slowly down Freddie’s stomach leaving goose bumps in it’s wake. Jim wrapped his hand around Freddie’s cock.

Freddie gasped, letting his head fall back onto Jim’s shoulder, groaning in frustration when Jim didn’t move the hand.

“Told you…” Jim teased “…just a massage. How do you feel?”

“Victimised” said Freddie with a lazy smile.

Jim was relieved he could see humour in his half lidded eyes.

Freddie was moving now. Trying to take more of Jim. It was instinctive.

Jim was growing hard himself, more insistent. He knew Freddie could feel it, pushing into his back, but he didn’t want to lose control.

“Think you can take another one sweetheart?” Jim growled in his ear.

Freddie groaned, nodding.

“Are you sure?” Jim whispered into his ear.

“Yes!” Freddie snapped, as though Jim were stupid.
Jim chuckled and pushed in another finger. Freddie whimpered, back arching, cheeks flushed, eyes closed.

Jim groaned at the vision. Watching his lover take so much, wanting so much more. He needed to be inside him now.

Jim gently withdrew his fingers, causing Freddie to whimper. “Don’t you want my cock little one?” he teased.

Freddie groaned. “Please, now!”

Freddie was growing impatient, as Jim poured more lube onto his cock.

“Patience sweetie” chuckled Jim. He was losing his own, desperately wanting to be inside Freddie again.

Jim pushed inside slowly. Wrapping both arms around Freddie, pulling him against his chest. He could feel every pulse, every movement of muscle, every gasp, every sigh, and he was in heaven.

Jim barely moved.

He knew Freddie was close, but he didn’t want this to end.

He wanted to leave his mark.

If this was their last night together – for six weeks, maybe even forever - Freddie was not going to forget it!

He began to move slowly, thrusting deeply.

Freddie dropped his head back onto Jim’s shoulder panting with every movement.

Jim bit into his neck, nipping at the delicate skin determined Freddie would go to America with a reminder of him every time he looked in the mirror.

Jim wrapped a hand around Freddie’s cock. He was close, he was so close, but Jim was in charge and he wanted him to wait. He wanted Freddie to feel amazing.

Jim stopped moving.

“Hold on little one. Hold on…” Jim whispered “…how do you feel?”

Freddie could only breathe hard, his beautiful dark eyes black with pleasure.

“I love you Freddie Mercury” Jim whispered and started to move again.

Freddie saw stars first, Jim felt his whole body clench, then shudder, with a silent scream.

Jim wasn’t far behind, as Freddie’s body clamped down on him impossibly.

Jim continued to thrust through wave after wave of pleasure, until Freddie went limp in his arms.

Unusually Jim recovered first.

He stroked Freddie’s sweat covered hair back, kissing his temple. “Are you alright darling?” he asked softly.
Freddie didn’t speak, he could barely focus, and his eyes kept drifting shut. Jim cradled him to his chest scattering kisses into his hair. “You’re be alright darling, you’re ok” he reassured him.

Freddie sprawled out on his back looking thoughtful. Jim noticed that for the first time since he had known Freddie, he seemed to be completely relaxed.

“It’s different” Freddie started softly, looking thoughtful.

“What’s different sweetheart?” asked Jim, lying against Freddie’s side, his fingers in his hair.

“This. Us. Together.”

“Are you trying to say sex?” Jim chuckled.

Freddie giggled.

“Good different? Or bad different?” Jim nudged him.

Freddie slapped Jim’s arm playfully.

“Good different, like now, I feel nice” he looked down at his stomach “I’m really sticky, but I can’t even move, so I don’t care.”

Jim chuckled “I’m sorry my darling, I’ll get the wash cloth for you.” Jim attempted to get up, but Freddie clutched onto his bicep.

“No, not yet, stay a bit longer” Freddie insisted.

Jim squeezed him “As long as you want honey….but you’ll still be sticky.”

Jim stroked an hand down Freddie’s side. Freddie whimpered.

“Still sensitive?”

Freddie nodded “Mmmm nice sensitive though.”

Jim smiled. “If you would talk to me, and tell me what you like – or more importantly what you don’t like – I could make it even better for you” Jim nuzzled into Freddie’s neck.

“See that there!” Freddie shrieked “No one has ever asked me that before.” Jim was appalled.

He nudged him again. “So, what’s the answer? What do you like?”

Freddie was quiet for a moment, then he giggled, and buried his blush red face into Jim’s shoulder.

“Awww” Jim laughed. “Ok. Too soon then, but…..” his voice took on a serious tone “…I worry Freddie. I worry that what we’re doing isn’t right for you.”

Freddie tilted his head, and looked at Jim quizzically. “In what way?”
“I don’t want to do anything that is going to hurt you sweetheart.”
“I’m fine” Freddie dismissed his concerns, and snuggled into his side.
But you’re not honey, thought Jim, you can’t be, but he could never speak out loud.

Jim had hoped that the sex would exhaust him.
That he would fall into a dreamless sleep for an hour or two, until Freddie was ready to go home.
That his mind would rest for that short period at least from the words that haunted him.
Cruel physical and mental abuse.
Never speak of your troubles. Being called a liar
Never find love.
Acts between two men in love is wrong.
How Freddie must feel about himself every day. How he must hate himself for every pang of lust
towards men - and gay he was - there was no doubt about that.
Jim no longer doubted that his own acts of love and lust were causing Freddie anything but
satisfaction.
If he didn’t initiate, Freddie would climb him, of that he was certain.
But what was Freddie trying to fulfill. His acts were passionate – inflamed even – raw and public.
Was Freddie trying to fill a void, a deep isolation, a primal wound that could never be reached, never
be healed.
At that moment, Freddie was deep in peaceful sleep.
His body completely abandoned to the weight of his muscles post orgasm. He mind hopefully
relieved of burden, and dreaming of stardom that awaited him. He murmured occasionally, but the
nightmares Jim had seen haunt him were staying away…for now.

Only ever sleep in your own bed.
The sentence awoke Jim with a start, and he scrambled up onto his elbow to look at his alarm clock
beside his bed. Three fifteen a.m. Shit!
Freddie would want to go home. Freddie never slept out. He only slept where he was safe, warm and fed, like a cat, Brian had said. How long before the nightmares began, once he realised he wasn’t in his bed? Freddie had awoken frightened and disorientated too often in Jim’s home.

Jim didn’t know what to do.

Freddie was fast asleep. Did he leave him to sleep? Should he wake him? Did he even have a key for his front door on him? So many people came and went in that household. I’m sure the lads would be tickled pink if he knocked them up at this hour.

Freddie stirred, mumbling quietly, insensibly.

He rolled over into Jim’s chest, and planted sweet little kisses in the hair.

Jim whispered “Freddie darling, we’ve fallen asleep and it’s very very late. Are you ok to stay here tonight? I don’t think the boys will be very pleased if we knock them up. You’re perfectly safe here. This is your bed too now.”

“Jim…” Freddie murmured without opening his eyes. “…please be quiet. A rock star that has been gloriously fucked needs their sleep.”

Jim chuckled, and dropped a kiss into his hair. “Night night darling.”

Jim smiled. Freddie Mercury, welcome to your new home.
Encounters: Spread your Wings

Chapter Summary

Feeling positive, Jim considers making some cosy changes to his home for when Freddie returns, and sets off happily to work, oblivious to what the day may hold. Freddie regrets the choices he made earlier, but America is approaching fast, and what will be, will be.

Chapter Notes

Lovies – This is it! The final chapter. Only the epilogue to follow. Just enjoy this one….. oh…..and picture the DreamWorks cat from Puss in Boots….you’ll know what I mean 😊 Love and hugs.

Pull yourself together ‘cause you know you should do better

That’s because you’re a free man

John Deacon

Jim awoke slowly and lazily.

He wasn’t especially keen to face this day.

Today was the day that Freddie would fly over the Atlantic, and out of his life.

For now, he would hold him a little longer.

Jim reached out his arm to pull Freddie to him, and suddenly realised that the warm body that had been beside him when he had fallen asleep was missing.

He pattered the empty bed, and leant up onto his elbow.

“Freddie?” he whispered.

Jim was suddenly wide awake, and berating himself for not waking when Freddie did. For not checking that he was ok, and comfortable, and not having nightmares.

Jim looked down at himself, he was completely naked.

He sat up and looked wildly around for evidence of what could have happened during the time he
had been sleeping, when he heard the softest snore coming from behind him.

He turned over, and saw his quilt and blankets bunched against the wall into a makeshift nest. Barely visible beneath, was a mop of midnight black hair.

Jim exhaled loudly with relief, and couldn’t help but smile.

Freddie had crawled into the tiniest area of the bed, between Jim’s back and the wall. He was fast asleep.

Is that what abused children do? Do they hide, and hope that if they can’t be found, they’ll be left alone?

Jim was amazed Freddie could breathe under there, but he was still here with him, still in Jim’s bed, and he counted that as a win.

Jim made a mental note to bring home the throws and cushions he had bought for the tent for when Freddie came home.

He would arrange them across the bed, then Freddie could burrow until his little heart was content.

Jim crawled on his elbows over to Freddie, burrowing his way into the blankets, snuggling into Freddie’s back. He wrapped his arm around Freddie’s waist, and placed a soft kiss on his cheek.

“Good Morning sweetheart” he whispered, not sure if Freddie was even stirring.

Freddie squeezed Jim’s hand and pulled him closer. “This is my side of the bed now” he croaked, his voice not yet ready for speech.

Jim chuckled “Is it now?” He kissed Freddie’s cheek “You can have it any way you like little darling, but I didn’t realise you were such a quilt thief”

Freddie giggled.

“Naked I am…naked!” said Jim with faux indignance.

“Mmmmm….me too” purred Freddie.

He raised one knee up to his chest.

Jim felt his cock start to awaken. Morning sex was his absolute favourite. He’d never had it with Freddie.

“Is that an invitation sweetheart? If it’s not, you need to be careful making yourself available to me in this way” Jim asked, and for all Freddie knew he was teasing.

Freddie smiled, and moved Jim’s hand to the underside of his thigh.

Jim’s cock was instantly hard.

“That is definitely an invitation” Jim stated with enthusiasm.

He pushed himself hard into Freddie’s back, running his hand softly down Freddie’s inner thigh to the join.

Freddie was so warm.
Jim ran his hands carefully over Freddie’s balls, then slowly up the length of his hardening cock. “Mmmmm…somebody is waking up. Is this alright honey?” Jim asked sweetly, after the event.

Freddie nodded with a smile.

Jim kissed him “Just a minute” he ferreted around on the bed for the lube. Pouring it over his hand before returning to the task.

Freddie was now fully awake, and breathing hard as Jim stroked his cock with a newly slicked hand.

Jim let his fingers explore, applying pressure along the space behind his balls. Freddie groaned.

Jim carefully eased a finger inside him, kissing up the back of his neck. “Is that too much darling?” he whispered.

“Just enough” Freddie smiled.

“Is this the first time you’ve woken up with a boyfriend?” Jim asked probing his finger carefully, causing Freddie to gasp.

He nodded. “I’m glad it’s you” he whispered pushing back into Jim, seeking more.

Jim felt himself heading down that slope, getting turned on too quickly. He wanted to make it nice for Freddie – but not too nice - he also wanted to be remembered.

He gently padded at the sweet spot, and Freddie’s gasps grew louder.

“More” he cried softly.

“Not yet darling…” Jim teased “…let your body wake up first.”

Freddie was having none of it, and he thrust back hard into Jim, making Jim groan with his impatience.

“You are a greedy little minx” Jim growled into Freddie’s neck carefully adding a second finger, and massaging a little harder.

Freddie ignited quickly, groaning and whimpering in turn as the warm sensations from Jim’s fingers swept across his body.

“Make love to me darling please, I need it” Freddie begged, trembling as the heat rolled off him.

“Slow down sweetheart” Jim insisted, slowing the movement of his fingers. “I want you to be comfortable.”

“I’m gonna come” Freddie whined helplessly.

Jim stopped moving immediately, shocked “What, already?”

Freddie nodded, gasping.

“Are you still sensitive from last night?” Jim asked softly.

Freddie nodded, pushing onto Jim.

“Hold on darling, let me take care of you.” Jim carefully withdrew his hand, much to Freddie’s
frustrated cries.

The cool lube on Jim’s cock nearly had him in the same state as Freddie.

Jim laid on his side along Freddie’s back, and running a hand along Freddie’s arms he gripped both wrists in one hand above his head.

“Oooh, are you going to restrain me?” asked Freddie, clearly happy about the idea.

Jim chuckled “Not until you learn to tell me what you don’t like.”

“I like being tied up” Freddie stated boldly, despite the aborted failed attempt of the experience with Winnie.

“Oh” said Jim sarcastically, nipping a trail of kisses up Freddie’s back and over his shoulder, as he lined himself up. “Now you’re telling me what you like. Too bad gorgeous, I will add bondage to the list for when you come home….but only when you can tell me what you DON’T like.”

“You’re just trying to tempt me home” Freddie stammered through gasps as Jim pushed slowly inside him.

“Are you checking me with my cock inside you?” asked Jim, rolling onto Freddie’s back, while trying to hold his weight off him.

Freddie could argue no more.

Jim ached from head to toe. He had never had so much sex, and he suspected Freddie must ache more, but he showed no sign of it as he pushed his body hard against Jim’s, taking everything he could give him.

Freddie was one very sexy man. Jim knew this would be quick.

“Harder!” screamed Freddie, as Jim struggled to strike a balance between giving him what he wanted, and hanging onto his own sanity.

Jim panted in Freddie’s ear, trying and failing to keep his weight off his back. Freddie didn’t seem to mind, he screamed for more.

Jim felt a part of him snap, as Freddie’s body tighten around his own, and he thrust hard, slamming straight into Freddie’s prostrate.

Freddie’s heightening cries aroused Jim more with every thrust, until he felt Freddie’s body clench, and suddenly he was coming too. Both crying out in unison, both collapsing together, both locked on to each other.

Jim released Freddie’s arms, and wrapped his small hand into his larger one, as they floated back down to earth together.

Freddie exhaled deeply.

“Satisfied?” asked Jim softly.

“Mmmmm” Freddie nodded. “For now” he giggled.
Jim slapped Freddie’s arse softly as he climbed out of the car.

“Gonna miss you sweet cheeks” said Jim, climbing out of the other side.

He slung an arm around Freddie’s shoulder loosely, steering him down the path towards the royal household.

“Where the fuck have you been?” shrieked Roger, like a concerned parent. “You never sleep out.”

Jim was just about to explain that he and Freddie had accidentally fallen asleep, when Freddie piped up “I was getting gloriously fucked by Jim.”

Jim would never get used to that.

How shy and private Freddie was until you got to know him, and then everything was just there on the outside for everyone to know. Jim glowed.

Roger’s face broke into smiles, and he clapped Jim’s back. “Glad to hear it. I don’t like when you two lovebirds fight.”

Brian wandered into the room with two large poles as though wondering how they had found their way into his hand.

“Jim, I’ve taken the tent down for you mate. I wasn’t sure what to do with all the stuff, there’s loads, and …..erm…” Brian’s face glowed as brightly as Jim’s had a moment ago. “….I didn’t really fancy washing it.”

Freddie laughed out loud at Brian’s discomfort, and clapped his hands.

“I’m coming now” said Jim, not quite able to meet Brian’s eyes. “I’ll pile it all into the car for now because I’ve got to get to work.” Jim looked at his watch. “Fuck! I’ve really got to get to work.”

Panicked suddenly, Jim felt Freddie clutch onto his arm. He pulled him into a hug.

“Don’t fret little one. I’m only scheduled on until lunchtime, then I’ll be back to go to the airport with you, alright?” Jim assured him.

Freddie didn’t seem to be calming.

“Freddie, you have nothing – NOTHING – to worry about ok? You’re going to love being on that stage. All your friends will be with you, and I will be here when you get back, I promise, no matter what, ok? We’ll work it out.”

Freddie nodded, but Jim didn’t think he seemed very assured, and despite himself he hoped Freddie found the courage to get on the plane.
Jim whistled as he walked into The Market Tavern, despite being late, and knowing he would be in for a sarcastic jibe from Derek Green.

He couldn’t help but glow. Despite the fact that Freddie would soon be gone, he felt great in himself, and he could only put that down to being in love.

Chris was behind the bar cleaning when Jim entered. That was unusual, Chris and he only ever worked the same shift if there was a band on, and the bar wasn’t even open to the public yet today.

“Alright Chris?” Jim called, double taking as he popped into the store room to hang his car keys on the hook, and pop the kettle on. “Fancy a brew?”

Chris didn’t respond.

When Jim popped his head around the door to ask Chris again if he would like a coffee, Derek Green was standing directly in his path.

“Hutton, a word” he barked.

“Do you want a coffee boss?” Jim inquired.

“No! I want a word” Derek barked.

Jim climbed the steps back into the bar, an uneasy feeling settling in the pit of his stomach.

“What can I do for you?” Jim asked pleasantly, despite his misgivings.

“You’re out Hutton” Derek barked bluntly.

“What do you mean out boss?” Jim asked innocently.

“Gone. Fired. You’re out of here. You were seen by a respectable member of the public, doing….I can’t repeat it. You know what you’ve done….in the toilets.”

Yes, he knew what he’d done, he didn’t need Derek to spell it out. Gay relations were still unpalatable to the majority of the world. However, the event in question happened days ago - a week or more - and no one had piped up until now. He had the right to defend himself.

“Well, I don’t know what you’ve heard boss, but there’s no truth in it!” Jim lied.

Derek raised his hands, his eyes were closed. Jim’s pleas were falling on deaf ears.

“You’ve been seen Hutton. Don’t even try to defend yourself. I always knew what you were, but I always thought you had a bit more sense. I’m guessing it was that lad from the band. You’re a great barman Hutton, why did you have to get involved with that manslut? Puts people off their beer. That filthy business.” Derek was on a rant.

Suddenly Jim was furious, and his finger was in Derek’s face. “Oy! You say what you like about me, but don’t fucking dare talk about Freddie like that. You leave him out of it, do you hear me?!”

Derek was suddenly exhausted. “You’ve left me no choice Hutton. You think I enjoy this? Just get out of here. I’m disappointed, but what can I do? You knew you were on a sticky wicket after my
last warning. You didn’t take heed, just go. I can’t have homosexuals fucking breeding in here.”

“Quick enough to take their money though aren’t you Derek?” Jim jibed, a dangerous glint in his eye.

Jim was furious.

Of course he was guilty, but he felt wronged.

He could see it all slipping away.

His job, the home he had just got Freddie settled in.

He had given up the opportunity to go to America with Freddie because of his loyalty to this place.

Now he had nothing.

For the second time in his life, every door was closed to him.

Jim felt the walls closing in.

He felt rage rip through him.

Memories of the angry man he used to be, when he was in Ireland, persecuted, and faced with no choice but to leave his family behind.

With a growl he plunged his fist into the wall narrowly missing Derek’s head.

Jim could see the man was shaken. He wasn’t sorry, but he couldn’t really hurt him. Derek was just another drone perpetuating gay slur. He didn’t invent it, and he sure as hell wasn’t smart enough to end it.

Jim had to get out of here. He just wanted to be with Freddie. Jim grabbed his keys and ran.

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Freddie couldn’t get comfortable on the sofa.

He bit into his nail, and winced.

It was chaos around him. Each of the boys had their own last minute dramas to deal with. He wasn’t quite packed yet either, but he couldn’t move.

He felt sick.

Jim had gone to work, and he was either being told right now that he was fired, or the bullet wouldn’t be fired until Freddie was somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean.

Freddie regretted his actions with all his heart.

How could he have been so stupid?!

How could he have been so careless with the livelihood of the man he loved?
Playing with his life. Molding it to his own bidding.

Jim would have nothing, and Freddie would be nothing without Jim.

Jim had even told him he loved him. God only knows why. He would hate him after this.

They had shared their last kiss.

Freddie despised himself.

He let out a loud sob, and covered his mouth quickly before anyone could hear.

Why couldn’t he just be a man about it, and ask Jim to come with him.

They could have talked it through, and worked something out.

Freddie knew exactly why.

He had asked for help before, he had asked someone who claimed to love him.

He had been let down at his most crucial point of need. He couldn’t do it again – ever.

Roger appeared at the door. “You alright Fred? You look a bit pale” he asked, wiping dust off his trousers, as he had just humped his bags down the stairs.

“He’s pining” Brian called through from the kitchen “…and we haven’t even set off yet. God help us all!” Brian finished with a chuckle.

“Well, don’t pine any longer” Roger pointed towards the window “Your beloved is here now.”

Freddie froze.

He couldn’t breathe.

Jim would break it off with him now before America. Right here in front of everyone.

He would be furious and hurt.

Jim would expose what he did to everyone, and they would hate him too.

There was a very loud knock at the door.

Brian made his way down the hallway. “Well get it then Fred!” he griped.

Freddie couldn’t move. He pulled his knees up to his chin, and started to tremble.

Jim was raging as soon as he entered the house. He couldn’t even look at Freddie.

“What do you mean no job?” asked Brian mystified.

“I mean I’ve been fucking fired!” raged Jim. “Some fucker reported me to the boss for mine and
Freddie’s antics in the bathroom after the last show. Not that it’s any of their fucking busy” he roared. “Fair enough, it was wrong, but to fire me!” he was getting louder.

“I’ve got nothing left” he bellowed. “If it weren’t for that job – no matter how pitiful – I can’t make rent” he shrugged. “If I don’t get something immediately I’ll have to leave London. I’ve nowhere else to go.”

Jim held out his hands.

“What happened to your hand Jim?” asked Brian calmly.

Freddie had already noticed it.

Jim looked at his bruised and bloodied knuckles, angry at Brian’s interruption. “I punched the fucking wall. He was lucky it weren’t his bastard head.”

Freddie couldn’t take anymore.

Jim’s voice was too loud.

It hurt his head.

Freddie dropped his head onto his knees and covered his ears.

“I just don’t know what fucking comes next” Jim bellowed “I’ve wanted to punch that homophobic twat for years, but I have held my tongue. I’m a good fucking barman….”

Suddenly Freddie felt a comforting arm around his shoulders.

“Jim will you calm the fuck down” growled a second voice. It was Roger’s. “He’s not long since come out of an abusive relationship you meathead, it affects people!”

Freddie could tell that Roger was angry too.

He heard a loud sigh, and suddenly felt himself being enveloped in larger familiar arms. He was pulled against a strong body, and rocked.

“I’m sorry Freddie” Jim’s voice was suddenly calmer, and more familiar. “I’m just angry sweetheart. I’m not angry at you. I could never be this angry at you.”

Freddie wanted the ground to open up, and swallow him whole.

Jim would be that angry with him in a moment, when Freddie told him exactly why he had been fired. Exactly who had reported him.

Jim continued “I know my job made me a bit rough sometimes, but I’d never hurt you love. Ever. I’m not that kind of man. It wouldn’t be a fair fight would it? I know what you went through with Bill, and I promised you that kind of life was over for you didn’t I? I meant it Freddie, look at me please.”

Freddie peered up at Jim through his hair.

He was the same man.

The same sweet man who had fucked him senseless this morning.
The same man who had held him last night.
The same man who had told him he loved him.

Jim deserved the truth. Freddie had to tell him.

He took a deep breath, and opened his mouth, and heard himself say “Come to America with us.”

Brian jerked his head at Roger, indicating to him to leave the room.

Roger opened his mouth to protest, but took one look at Brian, and he changed his mind. Reluctantly he headed for the stairs to pack the last of his things.

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“I can put you on the payroll Jim - if you want to come with us” said Brian calmly.

“Band assistant? Freddie’s P.A, whatever you want to call yourself. John collared me the other day, and mentioned that Freddie had been so much …calmer” he said politely. “….well… adjusted was the term he actually used, erm….but anyway he’d be keen for you to assist Freddie in America with his….personal stuff. I don’t think he meant screwing….” added Brian.

“I know what he meant” Jim interrupted. “Why are you just bringing this to me now Brian? You know what we’ve been going through.”

“Exactly mate. Please don’t take this wrong…either of you…but Fred’s relationships are never very consistent, and we didn’t want to end up asking you to come, and then Freddie not wanting you there. It’s disruptive. You’ve just heard it from Freddie’s own lips. He wants you to come.”

“As regards our living arrangements, that’s up to you. You’ll have a salary, so you can keep your place as a bolthole for you and Fred, or you can come and live here with us. We’ll sort something out. Between us….and I shouldn’t be saying this because he should tell you himself by rights, but Veronica told Deaky she is pregnant last night.”

Freddie and Jim gasped, but Brian was smiling.

“Deaky asked for her hand in marriage, and she said yes.” Brian was grinning from ear to ear. “So when we get back, Deaky will be looking for somewhere for himself, Veronica and the baby, so I can share with Roger, and you two can have my room – it’s bigger, or we’ll get a bigger place. Anyway, that’s a long way off. What I’m saying is, we’ll work something out.”

Brian stood and rubbed his hands together. “Have either of you got any questions?”

Freddie and Jim looked at each other, then back at Brian with open mouths, too shocked to form thought.

“In that case I’ll leave you two to talk.” Brian turned towards the door, then turned back to face them. “Oh mate, you had so much stuff here that I’ve packed you up a bag with clean clothes ready to go – to America, or home, whichever you choose. So, you’ll just need your passport before we head off.”

Jim’s jaw dropped even further. Fate ….otherwise known as Brian May…had even packed his bags
for him!

The door closed quietly, and Jim turned to Freddie.

“Jim..” Freddie said in earnest “…please come to America with us….with me. Please.”

Jim looked into those enormous brown eyes. He could see that Freddie was fighting back tears, pleading not to be let down again.

Suddenly Jim could see it all.

The showman; dazzling him into agreement. The businessman; showing him the deal of a lifetime. The sex fiend; large eyes, flushed cheeks, pouting lips. The lover; gazing at him softly with so much affection, but more than anything, he saw a small boy, begging not to be waved off at the gate again.

“Please Jim” whispered Freddie.

Jim had not a single reason why he held out on Freddie for so long. If Freddie’s lip wobbled, Jim would be a dead man.

“Yes” whispered Jim. “Yes Freddie, I will go to America with you. It would my dream come true to tour the world with you.”

Freddie leapt into Jim’s arms, catching him off balance and knocking him onto his back. They fell into a heap. A puddle of arms, legs and kisses.

This wasn’t the end. It was just the beginning.

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“Freddie come on, Mott’s here. We’ve kept them waiting ten minutes already” Brian called up the stairs.

A excited streak of slinky black dashed passed him, and out of the front door. “I need to tell everyone that Jim’s coming” yelled Freddie into his own wake. “We need to go get his passport.”

Brian and Jim stared after him with a chuckle.

Jim shook Brian’s hand. “I can’t thank you enough Brian. I don’t quite know what to say. If not for your faith in me, I would never have got close to Freddie, I would have been jobless, and homeless right now. I don’t quite know how to express my gratitude.”

“Don’t mention it Jim” said Brian, ever the humble man. “You’re good for Freddie, and that means you’re good for Queen. People are always saying to me for fucks sake don’t break up. I say to you Jim for fucks sake don’t fall out!”

Jim chuckled “I’ll do my best. He’s a mercurial little thing.”

Brian and Jim laughed, then hugged, clapping each other on the back loudly.

Taking one last look around, Brian headed out to the van.

Freddie dashed back inside, kissing Jim’s lips quickly, as he rushed up the stairs. “I forgot something” he called. Moments later he was back again, running down the stairs, and out of the front
door blowing on his whistle.

“What do you need that for?” Jim laughed.

“I want to use it in my act” he called over his shoulder. Jim laughed taking one last look around the household that had given his life purpose.

Roger appeared at the door waving Freddie’s blanket. “Fred you forgot to pack your blanket.”

Freddie waved him away dismissively. “I don’t need my blanket” he said with a beaming smile. “Jim’s coming,” with that he ran down the path towards his destiny.

Roger head back towards the stairs with the blanket.

“Roger” called Jim, too softly to be heard by Freddie. “Rog!” he called louder. Roger turned to him. Jim held out his hand for the blanket. “Freddie’s blanket can go in my pack. Somehow I suspect we’re going to need every tool in the kit.”

Roger nodded and passed the blanket to Jim. “You’re a good sort you know Jim Hutton.” Jim smiled.

“Aye, I’m not bad.” Jim smiled. "Anything to keep Freddie happy."

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The two bands were quite a sight outside the royal household.

“You’re actually the lead singer of Queen?” asked Ian Hunter looking down at Freddie. “You actually transform into that wild crazy looking dude from Seven Seas of Rhye?”

Freddie giggled “Yes! For the tenth time.”

“Can you sing?” teased Ian.

“I’m fucking amazing” snarled Freddie, the showman sliding into place.

Brian spotted Jim and Roger heading down the path, and walked towards them with the key. “Last call, has everybody got everything?” he yelled, reminding the boys of his old days as band manager. “I’m locking up.”

“Right in the van everyone” called Jim, trying on his new role.

The boys all crammed into the van.

“There aren’t enough seats now” moaned Deaky.

“I don’t need a seat” announced Freddie bouncing into Jim’s lap.

Jim yelped “Freddie my nuts!! Give me some warning.”

“Something tells me Jim would be happy to have Freddie bouncing on his balls for the rest of his days” laughed Roger.
Everybody laughed.

Six Weeks Later

“Queen set for Japan.”

He read out the headline of the newspaper article pinned behind the bar at The Market Tavern.

“Think they will ever come back?” he asked Derek Green, who was sweeping the bar floor.

“Who’s asking?” barked Derek brusquely.

The man held out his hand. “Prenter. Paul Prenter. I know Freddie well.”

“Really?” grunted Derek. “Funny, he never mentioned you. Not once.”

“In answer to your question….” Derek continued. “…nah! They never come back to the people who make them hey? Little old us. We’re not important anymore. If it weren’t for me and this bar, Queen would never have got off the ground” claimed Derek boastfully. “…and Freddie stole my best barman. Took Hutton with him. Bit of a fairy tale really I suppose” he continued. “Months Jim fought for him, months! He won him over in the end. Got his princess - so to speak. Now they are off gallivanting around the world together. He was the best barman I ever had.”

Chris rolled his eyes as he pulled a pint.

“Ey, don’t suppose you fancy a bit of bar work do you?” chanced Derek.

“Well…” Prenter nodded, disgruntled. “I would mate yeah. I’ve been a bit down on my luck lately.”

THE END

Don’t miss the epilogue coming soon.
Encounters: Freddie's Letter

Chapter Summary

Just a sad little something to make the letters make sense 😊
Please please read the tags lovies.

To make you smile, Ballet_Shoe has lovingly sketched our little Rock God as inspired by Encounters. Thank you so much! You are incredibly talented, these made my day 😊
https://cdn1.savepice.ru/uploads/2019/8/24/40916e5746b96863cc1b2f1aa546a13f-full.jpg

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dearest Daddy,

I’m in trouble at school, and I need you to help me.
I don’t know what to do.
My best friend was scared and couldn’t go to sleep, so I let him sleep with me.
Our dorm master told us off, and said we had to sleep in our own beds, but he wouldn’t stop crying so I said he could stay in my bed, and I would sleep in his.
That night someone came to visit me. He said it was because I am very special, but it was a secret and I shouldn’t tell anyone. He visits me a lot now, but only when it’s dark and everyone is asleep, I always feel scared.
I cry a lot but no one comes. Sometimes I get sick, and matron makes me stay with her at the hospital, and I hate it.
You said I should always tell an adult if something is wrong, so I told my master and he said that I was a liar, and somehow the other boys know now too, and they also call me a liar.
I’m not lying Daddy, I’m not! I can’t stay here, please tell the headmaster that you are coming to get me straight away.
I study hard, and I pray, and I’m good at running and cricket, but I’m not growing as fast as the other boys. My friend has boxing classes. Can I take boxing classes too Daddy – is that ok? I don’t think Mama would like it much, but I’m nearly a man now. Maybe I could learn while you come for me?

I know you’ll make it right Daddy. I can’t wait to be home with you and Mama and Kashmira again.

Your loving Freddie

Chapter End Notes

I once read ‘somewhere’ that Freddie said of his time at boarding school that he was avoiding two masters, and would have done anything for a third. I’ve never seen it
again, I can’t provide you with a reference, or vouch for its validity – but much like a motion to strike – once heard, it couldn’t be unheard.

Thank you all so much for joining me on this wonderful journey. For those who have taken the time to add your comments, thoughts (and sketches!), you have no idea how helpful you have been in the successful delivery of this tale. I’m not a writer, so Encounters has almost been a spiritual adventure for me.

I have no idea if I’ll ever be able to write anything again – I await inspiration.

It is alleged that a very kind friend has set up Tumblr and Instagram for Encounters: http://blownawayeveryday.tumblr.com/ and instagram.com/blownawayeveryday. Please do drop by for a chat. I always appreciate a scrummy Freddie pic or two.
Love & hugs xx

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